

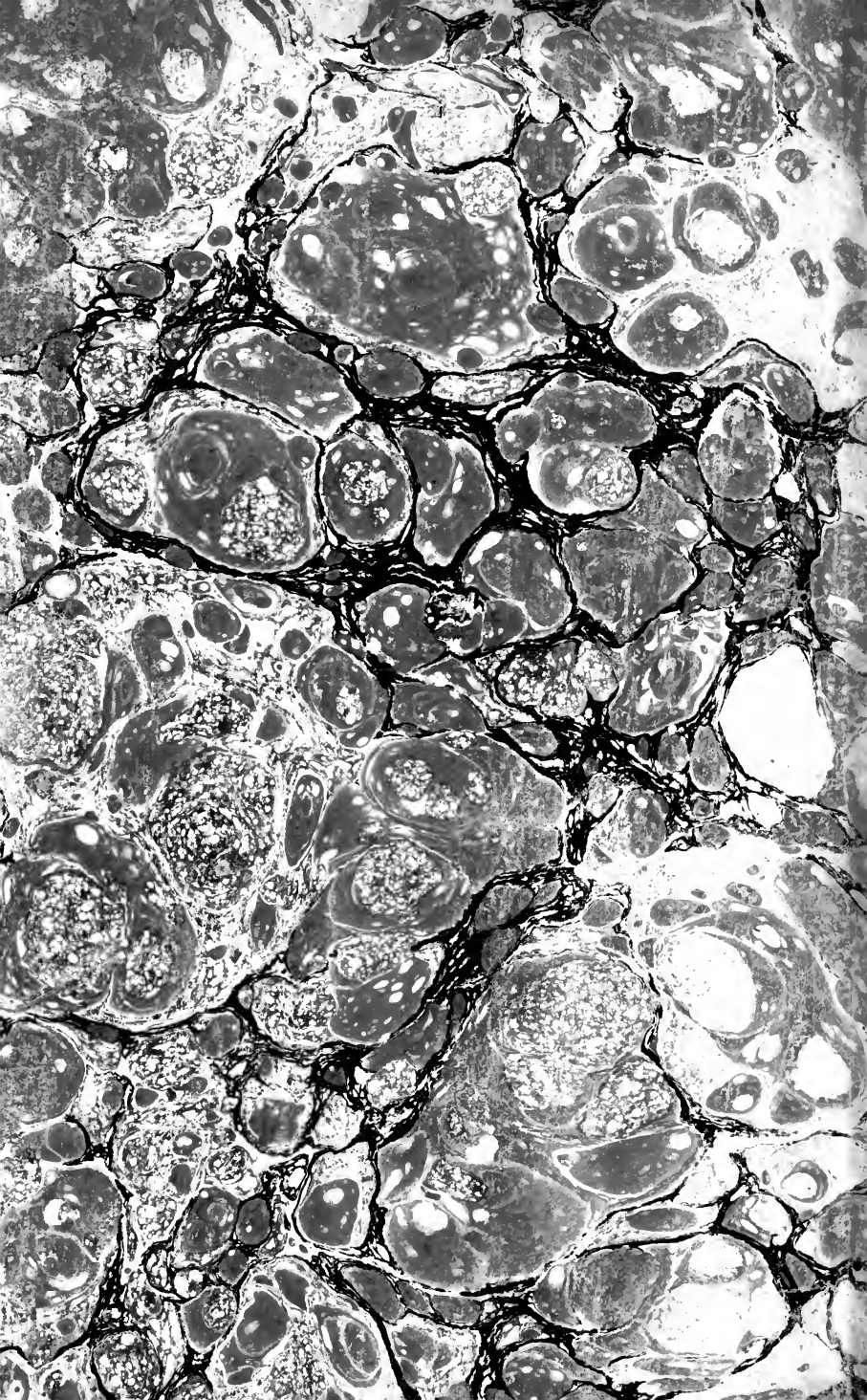




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New Series

S A M O R,

LORD OF THE BRIGHT CITY.

AN HEROIC POEM.

BY

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1818.

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_____ et o ! modo spiritus adsit,
Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges.
Milton. Mansus.

_____ the better fortitude
Of patience and heroic martyrdom.
Milton's Par. Lost, Book IX.

1897

1. The first of the year was a very cold day.
2. The second day was a very cold day.
3. The third day was a very cold day.
4. The fourth day was a very cold day.
5. The fifth day was a very cold day.
6. The sixth day was a very cold day.
7. The seventh day was a very cold day.
8. The eighth day was a very cold day.
9. The ninth day was a very cold day.
10. The tenth day was a very cold day.
11. The eleventh day was a very cold day.
12. The twelfth day was a very cold day.
13. The thirteenth day was a very cold day.
14. The fourteenth day was a very cold day.
15. The fifteenth day was a very cold day.
16. The sixteenth day was a very cold day.
17. The seventeenth day was a very cold day.
18. The eighteenth day was a very cold day.
19. The nineteenth day was a very cold day.
20. The twentieth day was a very cold day.

P R E F A C E.

THE Historians* of the Empire near the period of time, at which this Poem commences, make mention of a Constantine, who assumed the purple of the western empire, gained possession of Gaul and Spain, but was defeated and slain at the battle of Arles. He had a son named Constans, who became a monk, and was put to death at Vienna.

About the same time a Constantine appears in the relations of the old British Chronicles and Romances. He was brother of the king of Armorica, and became himself King, or rather

* Gibbon, Chap. 31.

an elected sovereign of the petty Kings of Britain,* who continued their succession under the Roman dominion. He was called Vendingard† and Waredur, the Defender and Deliverer. He had three sons, Constans, who became a hermit, and was murdered, either (for the traditions vary) by the Picts, by Vortigern, or by the Saxons; Emrys, called by the Latin writers Aurelius Ambrosius; and Uther Pendragon, the father of Arthur. These two Constantines are here identified, and Vortigern supposed to have been named King of Britain, as the person of greatest authority and conduct in the wreck of the British army, defeated at Arles. Many, however, of the chiefs in the Island advancing the hereditary right, before formally settled on the sons of Constantine, Vortigern, mistrusting the Britons, and prest by invasions of the Caledonians, introduced the Saxons to check the barbarians and strengthen his own sovereignty.

* Whitaker, Hist. of Manchester.

† Lewis, Hist. of Britain.

The Hero of the Poem is an historical character, as far as such legends can be called History. He appears in most of the Chronicles, as Edol, or Eldol, but the fullest account of his exploits is in Dugdale's Baro-nage under his title of Earl of Gloucester. William Harrison, however, in the Description of Britain prefixed to Holinshed, calls him Eldulph de Samor. But all concur in ascribing to him the acts which make the chief subject of the fifth and last Books of this Poem.

Most of our present names of places being purely Saxon, and the old British having little of harmony or association to recommend them, I have frequently, on the authority of Camden and others, translated them. Thus the Saxon Gloucester, called by the Britons, *Caer Gloew*, is the Bright City. The Dobuni, the inhabitants of the Vales, are called by that name. Some few sanctioned by old usage of Poetry and Romance I retain, as Kent, Thanet, Cornwall. London is *Troynovant*, as the City of the Trinobantes.

Some passages in the Poem will be easily traced to their acknowledged sources, the Poets of Greece and Italy; one however, in the third book, relating to the Northern mythology, has been remarkably anticipated in a modern Poem. The honourable Author may be assured that the coincidence is unintentional, as that part of this Poem was the earliest written, and previous to the appearance of his production.

SAMOR.

BOOK I.

LAND of my birth, oh Britain! and my love,
Whose air I breathe, whose earth I tread, whose tongue
My song would speak, its strong and solemn tones
Most proud, if I abase not. Beauteous Isle,
And plenteous! what though in thy atmosphere 5
Float not the taintless luxury of light,
The dazzling azure of the Southern skies;
Around thee the rich orb of thy renown
Spreads stainless, and unsullied by a cloud.
Though thy hills blush not with the purple vine, 10
And softer climes excel thee in the hue

And fragrance of thy summer fruits and flowers,
 Nor flow thy rivers over golden beds;
 Thou in the Soul of man, thy better wealth,
 Art richest: nature's noblest produce thou, 15
 The immortal Mind in perfect height and strength,
 Bear'st with a prodigal opulence; this thy right,
 Thy privilege of climate and of soil,
 Would I assert: nor, save thy fame, invoke,
 Or Nymph, or Muse, that oft 'twas dream'd of old 20
 By falls of waters under haunted shades,
 Her extacy of inspiration pour'd
 O'er Poet's soul, and flooded all his powers
 With liquid glory: so may thy renown
 Burn in my heart, and give to thought and word
 The aspiring and the radiant hue of fire. 25

Forth from the gates of Troynovant hath past
 King Vortigern; the Princes of the Isle
 Around him; on the walls, for then (though now
 Scorn bounds her mighty wilderness of streets,
 And in magnificence of multitude 30
 Spread, and illimitable grandeur,) walls
 With jealous circuit and embattled range

Girt Britain's narrow Capital ; where swarm'd
Eager her wondering citizens to see
The Monarch. Him the Saxon Hengist met, 35
And Horsa, with their bands in triumph led,
As from a recent victory ; their blue eyes
Sparkled, and proud they shook their saffron hair ;
And in the bicker of their spears, the toss
Of ponderous mallets, the quick flash of swords, 40
Th' emblazon'd White Horse on their banners waved,
Was triumph. Thus king Vortigern began :

“ Welcome, Deliverers ! of our kingdom's foes,
Welcome, thrice-honour'd Conquerors ! never more
Shall painted Caledonian o'er our realm 45
The chariots of his rapine wheel, so full
The desolation, havoc so complete
Hath smote and blasted in Erle Hengist's path.
The mouldering ruins of our Roman wall,
Leagued with the terror of the Saxon name, 50
Shall be defence more mighty, than when soared
Its battlements unbroken, and above
The imperial Eagle shook its wings of gold.
Oh, toil'd with victory, burthen'd with renown,

For ye our baths float cool and clear, our air 55
Is redolent with garland wreaths, and rich
Within our royal citadel is crown'd
For ye the banquet ; welcome once again,
Mighty to save, and potent to defend !"—

A faint acclaim, a feeble sullen din 60
Ensued, with less of gladness than fierce grief,
And wrath ill stifled. Seeming all unmoved,
Elate the Monarch onward led the way ;
Slow follow'd Saxon Hengist's martial train,
Clashing their armour loud, as they would daunt 65
All Britain with the clamour : march'd behind

The island Nobles, save some restless hands
Were busy with their sheathed swords, they mov'd
Silent, and cold, and gloomy, as a range
Of mountain pines, when cloudy lowers the storm. 70

Upon the azure bosom of the Thames
Reclining, with its ponderous mass of shade,
Arose the royal Citadel, the work
Of the great Cæsar. Danger he and dread
Of Rome and Pompey ; yet 'gainst savage foes 75
Vantage of trench and tower and massy wall

Scorn'd not, so swift, so perilous, so fierce
Cassivelan his painted charioteers
Whirl'd to the frantic onset, standing forth
Portent of freedom mid a world enslav'd. 80

They pass'd the portal arch; the sumptuous hall
Flung back its gates; around the banquet board
Rang'd Prince and Chieftain, where luxurions art
Shower'd prodigal her dainties, poisons sweet,
And baleful splendour. Fierce the Saxon gaz'd 85

On goblet, and huge charger carved with gold,
Contemptuous wonder. But the Monarch's brow
'Gan lighten, as with greedy joy he quaff'd
Oblivious bliss; thus ever guilty soul
Woos frenzy, and, voluptuous from despair, 90

Forgets itself to pleasure. High aloof,
Each in his azure robe, the band of Bards
Mingled the wanton luxuries of sound;
Gentle melodious languor, melting fall,
With faint effeminate flattery the soul 95

Guiling of manhood. Silent veil'd his harp
White-hair'd Aneurin, and indignant tears
Stood in the old man's eye, for wrathful shame

To hear his godlike and heaven-breathing art
Pampering loose revels with officious chime. 100
Then rose the glorious madness; forth he sprung,
With one rude stroke along the clashing chords
Won silence deep as of a summer eve
After a noontide storm; his silver locks
Wav'd proud, the kindling frenzy of his eye 105
Flash'd triumph, as the song of Chariots rose.
The song that o'er the van of battle shower'd
Pale horror, when that scourg'd Icenian Queen
Through the square legions drove her car; were heard
Her brazen wheels to madden, the keen scythes 110
Grinde through their iron harvest; then rush'd route,
Wail'd havoc; seem'd Bonduca fiercer urg'd
The trampling steeds; behind her silence sank
Along the dreary path of her revenge.
Ceas'd the bold strain, then deep the Saxon drain'd
The ruddy cup, and savage joy uncouth 116
Lit his blue gleaming eyes: nor sate unmov'd
The Briton Chiefs; fierce thoughts began to rise
Of ancient wars, and high ancestral fame.
Sudden came floating through the hall an air 120

So strangely sweet, the o'erwrought sense scarce felt
Its rich excess of pleasure ; softer sounds
Melt never on the enchanted midnight cool,
By haunted spring, where elfin dancers trace
Green circlets on the moonlight dews ; nor lull 125
Becalmed mariner from rocks, where basks
At summer noon the Sea-maid ; he his oar
Breathless suspends, and motionless his bark
Sleeps on the sleeping waters. Now the notes
So gently died away, the silence seem'd 130
Melodious ; merry now and light and blithe
They danced on air : anon came tripping forth
In frolic grace a maiden troop, their locks
Flower-wreath'd, their snowy robes from clasped zone
Fell careless drooping, quick their glittering feet 135
Glanc'd o'er the pavement. Then the pomp of sound
Swell'd up, and mounted ; as the stately swan,
Her milk-white neck embower'd in arching spray,
Queens it along the waters, entered in
The lofty hall a shape so fair, it lull'd 140
The music into silence, yet itself
Pour'd out, prolonging the soft extacy,

The trembling and the touching of sweet sound.
Her grace of motion and of look, the smooth
And swimming majesty of step and tread, 145
The symmetry of form and feature, set
The soul afloat, even like delicious airs
Of flute or harp: as though she trod from earth,
And round her wore an emanating cloud
Of harmony, the Lady mov'd. Too proud 150
For less than absolute command, too soft
For aught but gentle amorous thought: her hair
Cluster'd, as from an orb of gold cast out
A dazzling and o'erpowering radiance, save
Here and there on her snowy neck repos'd
In a sooth'd brilliance some thin wandering tress. 155
The azure flashing of her eye was fring'd
With virgin meekness, and her tread, that seem'd
Earth to disdain, as softly fell on it
As the light dew-shower on a tuft of flowers.
The soul within seem'd feasting on high thoughts, 160
That to the outward form and feature gave
A loveliness of scorn, scorn that to feel
Was bliss, was sweet indulgence. Fast sank back

Those her fair harbingers, their modest eyes,
Downcast, and drooping low their slender necks 165
In graceful reverence; she, by wond'ring gaze
Unmov'd, and stifled murmurs of applause,

Nor yet unconscious, slowly won her way
To where the King, amid the festal pomp,
Sate loftiest; as she rais'd a fair-chas'd cup, 170

Something of sweet confusion overspread
Her features; something tremulous broke in
On her half-failing accents, as she said,
“Health to the King!”—the sparkling wine laugh'd up,
As eager 'twere to touch so fair a lip. 175

A moment, and the apparition bright
Had parted; as before, the sound of harps
Was wantoning about the festive hall.

As one just waking from a blissful dream
Nor moves, nor breathes, lest breath or motion break 180
The beauteous tissue of fine form woven o'er
His fancy, sate king Vortigern. “Whence came,
And whither went she? of what race and stem
Sprang this bright wonder of our earth, that leaves
The rapture of her presence in our hall, 185

Though parted thence too swiftly ?"—" King (replied
Erle Hengist)—in our ancient Saxon faith,
Ill bodes the joyless feast, where maiden's lips
Pledge not the wassail goblet."—" By my soul,"
Cried Vortigern, " a gallant faith ! and I 190
Omen so sweet discredit not ; the health
Those smooth lips wish'd me, well those lips might give,
A fragrance and a sparkling have they left
Even on the wine they touch'd."—He said, and prest
The goblet to his own. " A father's ear, 195
King Vortigern, must love the flattering tongue
That descants lavish on his daughter's praise."
" Thy daughter ? Saxon!"—"Mine, though vaunt not I
Her beauty, many a German Erle and King
Hath vow'd at his life's peril to proclaim 200
Her far-surpassing comeliness."—None heard
The secret converse that ensued. Lo, rose
King Vortigern, and from his brow transferr'd
A coronet of radiant Eastern gems
To the white hair of Hengist, and drank off 205
A brimming cup, and cried, " To Kent's high King
A health, a health to Vortigern's fair bride,

The golden-hair'd Rowena."—Seiz'd at once
Each Saxon the exulting strain, and struck
The wine-drain'd goblet down, "Health, King of Kent!"

As mid the fabled Libyan bridal stood 211
Perseus, in stern tranquillity of wrath,
Half stood, half floated on his ancle plumes
Out-swelling, while the bright face on his shield

Look'd into stone the raging fray; so rose, 215
But with no magic arms, wearing alone
Th' appalling and control of his firm look,
The solemn indignation of his brow,

The Briton Samor; at his rising, awe
Went abroad, and the riotous hall was mute; 220
But like unruffled summer waters flow'd
His speech, and courtly reverence smooth'd its tone.

"Sovereign of Britain's Sovereigns! of our crowns
The highest! in our realm of many thrones
Enthron'd the loftiest! mighty as thou art, 225
Thou dost outstep thy amplitude of sway;
Thine is our isle to govern not to give;
A free and sacred property hast thou
In our allegiance; for a master's right

Over our lives, our princedom, and our souls, 230

King Vortigern, as well mayst thou presume

To a dominion o'er our winds, to set

Thy stamp and impress on our light from heaven.

This Britain cannot rest beneath the shade

Of Saxon empire, this our Christian soil 235

The harvest of obedience will not bear

To Heathen sway; and hear me, Vortigern,

The golden image that thou settest up,

Like the pride-drunken Babylonian king,

Though dulcimer and psaltery soothe us down 240

To the soft humour of submission tame,

We will not worship."—From the hall he past,

Thus saying. Him the Island's brave and proud

Follow'd, the high and fame-enamour'd souls,

Never to Britain wanting, though in hours 245

Loosest of revels soft, and wanton ease.

But Vortigern, more largely pouring in

The vine's delicious poison, sate, and cried,

"Whom the flax binds not, must the iron gyve,

Whom sceptres daunt not, must the sword control."

Evening fell gentle, and the brilliant sun 251

Was going down into the waveless Thames,
As bearing light and warmth to her cold Nymphs
Within their crystal chambers, when the King
Left the hall of banquet. Lofty and alone, 255
Even as the Pillar great Alcides set,
The limit of the world and his renown,
On Calpe, round whose shaft the daylight wreathed
Its last empurpling, on the battlements
Stood Samor in the amethystine light, 260
And "Go to darkness, thou majestic orb!
To-morrow shall the nations bask again
In thy full glory."—Thus he said, and turn'd
To where the King went rapid past.—"And thou,
Thou to thy setting hastest, never more 265
Thou thy benighted splendour to renew;
Late at thy noon of pride, now sunk, declined
For ever from thy fair meridian, go
Into thy cloudy rest!"—The solemn tone
Of his deep voice seized on the King, as frosts 270
Arrest the rapid flowing stream.—"What means
The Sovereign of the Vales, even in my halls,
And on my castle battlements, to cast

Bold scorn on Britain's king? Ingrate, and blind,
When I the valiant Saxon have brought in 275
To check the Caledonian, through your isle
Marching by wild light of your burning towns ;
Ye, wedded to your sorrow and your shame,
Mock at the safety my free love provides."
" Ah, provident ! ah, sage ! ah, generous King ! 280
That sets the emaciate wolf to dog the flock ;
The hawk to guard the dovecote."—" Wise-lipp'd chief,
I thank thee for thy phrase : doves are ye, doves
That fly with piteous and most delicate speed
Before the Scottish kites, that swoop your nests 285
And flesh their greedy talons in your young."—
" Monarch ! the eaglet, were it smoothly nurst
In the dove's downy nest, at its first flight
Would shrink down dazzled from the morning sun ;
But with strong plumes refresh'd, anon 'twould claim
Its old aspiring birthright, and unblench'd 291
Bathe in the bickering of the noontide car.
Oh, we have slumber'd on soft luxury's lap,
To her loose tabret ; but, misjudging King !
Britain is like her soil ; above the turf 295

Lies velvet smooth, hard iron lurks beneath.
I know the northern Pagans waste our land,
And the tame mission to the Roman sent
I know, 'The fierce Barbarian to the sea
Drives us, the sea to the Barbarian back. 300
Merciless': so ran the plaintive legend. True!
But soldiers would it cast us back; despair
Hath its own valour; war makes warriors. King!
Calamities are on us, evil days
O'er our isle darken, but the noble wear 305
Disaster, as an Angel wears his wings,
To elevate and glorify. Nor us
Shroudeth alone the enveloping gloom, the frame
And fabric of our world is breaking up.
Rome's dome of empire, that o'ervaulted earth 310
With its capacious shadow, rent and split,
Disorders the smooth course of human things,
Leaving confusion lord of this wide ball,
While to and fro the Nations sway perplex'd,
Like a tempestuous sea. Oh, mid such wreck, 315
Our Britain in lone safety to uphold,
On every side 'gainst gathering foes present

A rampire of hard steel, or firmer far,
The bulwark of a haughty spirit pour'd
From the thron'd Sovereign through her sons, were pride,
Were honour, might arrest Heaven's plumed hosts. 321
And in their sphere-born music win renown.
So He whose sceptre glitters in thy grasp,
He the Deliverer, the Defender nam'd,
So Constantine had done, had the high Soul's bane, 325
Ambition, never maddened him to wear
The purple, madly worn, yet nobly lost
On the sad plain by Arles."—" I knew, I knew
'Twould come to this, that Constantine would end
The high-wrought orat'ry. This too I know, 330
And this I tell thee, Samor! nor yet add
Rebel! thy secret commerce with his sons,
To undermine my stately throne; the right,
So babble ye in your licentious phrase,
Conferr'd by our assembled British Kings 335
On Constantine for ever and his heirs."—

“Alas! how better were it to know nought,
Than, like Kings, darkly. Constantine's brave sons
And Samor oft have met, have met to wail

•

The hazard of their native land, to swear 340
Before the altar of the eternal God,
Never, amid these rude and perilous times,
To blow the trump of civil strife, to prop
With their allegiance Britain's throne, though fill'd
By one they deem usurping. Vortigern! 345
I am upon the string that jars thy soul,
And it must vibrate to its highest pitch.
Oh what a royal madness, that might build
Upon the strong rock of a people's love,
Yet chooseth the loose quicksand of distrust, 350
And overlays the palace of his pride
With a rude Saxon buttress, whose stern weight
Must crush it. Thou dost fear thy subjects arm'd,
Fear, lest the old valiance in their hearts inure,
And therefore fight'st their wars with foreign steel; 355
And is this he, the noble and the wise,
The Vortigern, that Britain on the plain
Of Arles, that fatal plain, hail'd Captain, King?
Arise, be King, be Captain, be thyself!
And we will stand around thy throne, and mock 360
The ruinous fashion of the times."—" Away !

My royal word is to the Saxon given."
 " Oh, Vortigern ! this knee hath never bow'd,
 Save to the King of Kings, thus low on earth
 I sue thee, cast the Saxon off."—At once 365
 The swift contagious grandeur set on fire
 The Monarch—" I am thine, am Britain's all :
 Now by my throne, thus, thus I have not felt,
 Since first this circling gold eat in my brow,
 So free, so upright, and so kingly, chains 370
 Fall from me, mists are curling off my soul."

Like two bold Venturers, silently they stand,
 Launching amid the sun-light their rich bark
 O'er glassy waters to the summer airs :
 Their solemn pondering hath the lofty look 375
 Of vaunting, over each high brow flames out
 A noble rivalry of hope and pride.

The sound of wheels, lo, sliding came and smooth
 A car, wherein, like some fair Idol led
 Through the mute tumult of adoring streets, 380
 Bright-hair'd Rowena pass'd the portal arch.

Have ye a sense, ye gales, a conscious joy
 In beauty, that with such an artful touch

And light ye float about her garment folds,
Displaying what is exquisite display'd; 385
And thinly scattering the light veil where'er
Its shadowing may enhance the grace, and swell
With sweet officiousness the clustering hair
Where fairest tufts its richness, and let fall
Where drooping most becomes; that thus ye love 390
To lose yourselves about her, and expire
Upon her shape, or snow-white robes? She stood,
Her ivory arm in a soft curve stretch'd out,
As only in the obedience of her steeds
Rejoicing; they their necks arch'd proud and high, 395
And by her delicate and flower-soft hands
Sway'd, as enamour'd of her mastery mov'd,
Lovingly on their bright-chaf'd bits repos'd,
Or in gay sport upon each other fawn'd.
But as the Monarch she beheld, she caught 400
The slack rein up, and with unconscious check
Delay'd the willing coursers, and her head,
Upon her ivory shoulder half declin'd
In languor of enjoyment, rising wore
Rosy confusion, and disorder fair, 405

Transiently on her pride of motion broke.
Or chance, or meaning wander'd to his face
Her eye, with half command, entreating half;
Haughty to all the world, but mild to him,
Th' all admir'd admiring, and th' all-awing awed— 410
She look'd on him, and trembled as she look'd.
Alone she came, alone she went not on.

BOOK II.

Noon is ablaze in Heaven, but gloom, the gloom
Of the brown forest's massy vault of shade,
Is o'er the Kings of Britain ; the broad oaks,
As in protection of that conclave proud,
Like some old temple's dome, with mingling shade 5
Meet overhead, around their rugged trunks
Shew like fantastic pillars closely set
By Druids in mysterious circle, wont
Here, when the earth abroad was bright and clear
With moonshine, to install their midnight rites 10
By blue nor earthly kindled fires, while Bards
Pour'd more than music from their charmed harps,
Each on his mossy seat, in arms that cast
A glimmer which is hardly light, they sit

Colossal, stern, and still ; on every brow 15
Indignant sorrow and sad vengeance lowers.
Them had the Pagan peasant deem'd his Gods,
In cloudy wrath down stooping from the heavens
To blast the mighty of mankind, and wreak
On some old empire ruin and revenge, 20
And first majestic yet mild arose
A lofty shape, nor less than monarch seem'd,
Whose royal look from souls bold, brave, and free,
Not stooping slavery claim'd, but upright awe
And noble homage ; yet uncrown'd, he wore 25
Dominion, him with stately reverence heard
That armed Senate. " Princes of the land,
Lords of the old hereditary thrones
Of Britain, we, the sons of Constantine,
Emrys and Uther, come not here to charge 30
Inconstant counsel on your wisdom, nought
Arraigning, that the sceptre to our line
Solemnly given, in those disastrous days,
When for the Empire of the Occident,
For Gaul o'er-master'd, and submitted Spain, 35
Warr'd Constantine, and warring nobly fell,

Ye placed in elder hand, our right foregone
For the more precious public weal: oh, Chiefs,
'Twas well and wisely done; a stripling's arm
May rear the kingly standard in its pomp 40
To play with Zephyrs under cloudless skies,
But when the rude storm shakes its ponderous folds
'Twere hard for less than the consummate man
Aloft to bear it, yet unstooping. Well
Stemm'd your new standard-bearer Vortigern 45
The o'ershadowing tempest, nor abas'd his front
Your crown's old glories; till, alas! dire change!
Dread fall! the sceptre that ye fondly hoped,
Would blossom, like the Hebrew Hierarch's rod,
With the almond bloom of mercy and of love, 50
Liker the Egyptian magic-worker's wand
Became a serpent, withering all your peace
With its infection: then your virtues wrought
Your sorrows, from your valour grew your shame.
Your borders were o'erleap'd, your towns on fire, 55
And the land groan'd beneath fierce Rapine's wheels.
Ye cried unto your King for arms, he sage
In cold and jealous wisdom fear'd to arm,

Whose arms might brave himself, and cast control
On the fierce wanderings of his royal will. 60

Saxons must fight our wars, our hard-wrung gold

Buy us ignoble safety, till the slaves

Swell'd into Lords, and realms must pamper

Our hirelings into Princes; Kent, fair Kent,

The frontlet of our isle, where yet are seen 65

The graves great Cæsar peopled with his dead,

When on his rear the Briton conqueror hung,

Where first the Banner of the Cross was wav'd,

Sinks to a Heathen province. Warriors! Kings!

This must not be among baptized men, 70

This cannot be 'mong Britons. Therefore here,

Here in your presence dare we call again,

Your throne our throne, and challenge in your love

A Sovereign's title, by our youth we fell

From that great height, but Vortigern hath fall'n 75

By his own guilt, we therefore rise again

In majesty renew'd; he falls, no more

To soar into the sacred royal seat."

Thereat with concord loud, and stern acclaim,

Gave answer that proud Senate, and denounc'd 80

Judgment irrevocable. But with mien
Somewhat appall'd, as one in high debate
And solemn council unassay'd, arose
Prince Uther ; ere he spake his clanging mail
Smote with fierce stroke, as audience to enchain, 85
Himself the battle sound enkindling, high
His haughty brow and crested helm upflung,
Thus rude his fiery eloquence pour'd forth.

“ Warriors of Britain! me nor pomp of words
Beseems, nor strife of smooth and liquid phrase, 90
In the debate of swords, the fray of steeds
No combatant unskill'd. I will not boast
That I have brook'd with Emrys' patient pride
A sceptre's loss ; a boy, I wept to hear
My father's crown was on a stranger's brow. 95
But when my arm gan grasp a sword, those tears
Those soft unseemly waters, turn'd to hues
Of burning indignation ; every crown
Shew'd, every kingly title to my ear
Sounded a scorn and shame. Even at his height 100
And plenitude of power I yearned to rise
Against th' enthron'd Usurper—now, oh Kings !

Thus charter'd, thus commission'd, thus array'd,
With what a noble phrenzy will we rush,
Trampling the wreck of Saxon and of King ; 105
Our path shall be as rapid and as bright
As summer meteor, more pernicious, that
Waning into the dull unkindling air,
We burning, desolating as we pass.
On, Britons, on, a tyrant fills your throne, 110
Nor fitter monument may tyrant find
Than his throne's ruins ; let the flat earth close
O'er both at once ; the stranger Saxon lord's
Within our isle, the seas that bore him here,
In his storm-braving navy, bear him back 115
Weltering and tossing in their drowning surge.

Low'ring he stood, still in fierce act of speech,
Yet speechless. Sudden, then, in dread uproar
Rose shout of war, with thundering clash of arms
Mingled, then hurrying spears and nodding helms 120
With glittering tumult in the pale gloom flash'd ;
War, war each voice, each stricken shield denounc'd.

Amid the multitudinous din arose
Solemnly the Bright City's Lord, down sunk

Instant all tumult, broke abruptly off : 125

Fierce voice and clash of arms : so mute and deep

Settled the silence, the low sound was heard

Of distant waterfall, the acorn drop

From the green arch above. Still and abash'd

Sate the fierce conclave, while with mild reproof 130

Winning all hearts, the gracious Chieftain spake.

“ Brave sight for earth and heaven ! it doth not fail

A nation's cry for freedom and for faith,

Nor faint, nor deaden in the mist and gloom

Of this low earth, it takes the morning's wings, 135

Passeth the crystal skies, and beats heaven's gate ;

There glideth through the gladdening Angel choirs,

That fan it onward with their favouring plumes,

To the eternal sapphire throne, and him

That sits thereon, Ineffable. Oh Kings, 140

Our council thus appealing may not wear

Seeming of earthly passion, lust of sway,

Or phrenetic vengeance : we must rise in wrath,

But wear it as a mourner's robe of grief,

Not as a garb of joy : must boldly strike, 145

But like the Roman, with reverted face,

In sorrow to be so enforc'd. Brave Chiefs,
It would misseem a son of this proud isle,
To trample on the fallen, though a King;
It would misseem a Christian to rejoice 150
Where virtue hath play'd false, and fame's pure light
Hath sicken'd to dishonourable gloom.
Vortigern is our foe, no more our King,
Yet King he hath been, King he had been still,
Had never his high vaulting pride disdain'd 155
The smooth dominion of old use, nor striven
To fix on our impatient necks the yoke
Of foreign usurpation ; our free land
Will not endure the heathen Saxons rule,
Nor him that rules by heathen Saxon power. 160
So march we forth in th' armour of our right,
From our once King not falling off in hate
Or fickleness, but by severe constraint
Of duty to ourselves and to our God.
So march we forth, and in such state may make 165
Our mother land to vaunt of us; raise up,
Side by side, the fair airs to captivate
To an approval of our upright deed,

Our royal banner and the Cross of Christ;
And move within their cirque of splendour, calm, 170
And yet resistless as the bright-man'd steeds
That bear the Morn to disenthroned old Night.

And now our kingly sceptre, forced aside,
By stress and pressure of disorder'd times,
Devious into an alien hand, reverts 175

To the old line; the heir of Constantine,
Constans, the elder than this noble pair,
Stands foremost on succession's golden roll.

Nor know not I his gentle soul more apt,
To listen the soft flowing vesper hymn, 180

Than danger's spirit-stirring trump, yet deem,
Thus once forewarn'd, 'tis dangerous to divert
The stream of royal blood, that broken, pours
Waters of bitterness and civil strife

O'er th' harass'd land, and therefore thus hail I 185

Constans the King of Britain. Speak I right?

I pause, and wait, oh Chiefs, your high award."

He ceased, nor time for voice or swift acclaim,
Scowling a sullen laugh of scorn, leaped forth

The mountain King, the Sovereign of the lakes 190

And dales this side the Caledonian bound ;
He only, when the Kings sate awe-struck, stood
Elate with mocking pity in his frown ;
A mighty savage, he of God and man
Alike contemptuous ; nought of Christian lore
Knew he, yet scoff'd unknown, 'twas peaceful, meek,
Thence worthless knowledge. Him delighted more
Helvellyn's cloud-wrapt brow to climb, and share
The eagle's stormy solitude ; 'mid wreck
Of whirlwinds and dire lightnings huge he stood,
Where his own Gods he deem'd on volleying clouds
Abroad were riding and black hurricane.
Them in their misty pride assail'd he oft
With impious threat, and laugh'd when th' echoing glens
His wild defiance cast unanswered back.
Now with curl'd lip of scorn, and brow uplift,
Lordly command, not counsel, fierce he spake.
—"Shame, coward shame ! as though the fowls of heaven,
When in dusk majesty and pride of wing
Sails forth the monarch eagle, down should stoop
In homage to the daw. Oh craven souls,
When Snowdon or high Skiddaw's brow is bare,

To plant the stately standard of revolt
Upon a molehill. Constans ! that to him
Caswallon should bow down ; aloft our crown 215
Upon the giddy banner staff, that rocks
On Troynovant's tall citadel, uphang,
And who the dizzy glory will rend down,
Or Constans or Caswallon ? The bright throne
Environ with grim ranks of steel-girt men : 220
Huge Saxons black with grisly scars of war,
Who first will hew to that triumphal seat
His ruinous path ? Hear, sceptred Britons, hear,
A counsel worthy the deep thoughts of kings :
Of valorous achievement and bold deeds 225
Be guerdon to the mightiest of our Isle,
The Sov'reignty of Britain ; spurn my voice,
And I renounce your counsels, cast you off,
And with my hardy vassals of the north
I join the Saxon."—Then fierce sounds again 230
Broke out, wan flames of brandish'd armour flash'd.
In rude disorder and infuriate haste
Sprang every warrior from his seat, as clouds
Amid the sultry heaven, thunderous and vast,

Gather their blackening disarray to burst 235
Upon some mountain turret, so the Chiefs
Banded their fierce confusion to rush on,
And whelm in his insulting pride the foe.

He stood as one in joy, and lower'd a smile,
With wolf-skin robe flung back, broad shield outstretch'd,
And battle axe uplift : vaunting and huge 241
As fabled giant on embattled Heaven
Glaring not less than utter overthrow,
And total wreck ; forthwith a youth rush'd out,
His moony buckler high upheld to bar 245
The onset, and with voice, which youthful awe
Temper'd to tone less resolute, address'd
The haughty Chieftain. " Father, deem not thou,
Malwyn confederate in thy lawless thought,
Mine is a Briton's soul, a Briton's sword, 250
But mortal man that seeks thy life, must pass
O'er Malwyn's corpse." Back Chief and King recoil'd,
In breathless admiration. Nobler pride,
And human joy almost to softness smooth'd
Caswallon's rugged brow. " Well hast thou said, 255
Son of Caswallon, worthy of thy sire !

On thine own track mount thou to fame, nor swerve
 For man, or more than man."—Awhile the Kings
 Brief parley held, then stately and severe
 Rose Emrys, and pronounc'd their stern arrest. 260

"Caswallon of the Mountains, long our isle
 Hath mark'd thy wavering mood, now friend now foe;
 Now in the Caledonian inroad prompt
 To bear thy share in rapine, foremost now
 In our high councils. This we further say, 265
 We scorn thy war, Caswallon, hate thy peace,
 And deem it of our mercy that, unscath'd,
 We ban thee from our presence." Nor reply
 Caswallon deign'd; calm strode he as in scorn
 Of wrath 'gainst foes so lowly. Far was heard 270
 His tread along the rocky path, the crash
 Of branches rent by his unstooping helm.
 They in blank wonder sate, nor wholly quell'd
 Wrath and insulted majesty, with look
 As he were still in presence fix'd, and stern. 275
 Then spake Prince Emrys, "Not of trivial toil
 To shape the rude trunk of our enterprize
 To smooth perfection; deeply must we found,

And strongly build the fabric of our hopes,
And each must hold his charge. Be, Samor, thine 280
To bear our brother Constans Britain's crown,
In name of our assembled Kings. Be mine
From the Armoric shore, King Hoel's realm,
(Our father's brother, Hoel) to embark
The succours of his high-fam'd Chivalry. 285
Thou, Uther, to the West; each other King
Unto his own, at signal of revolt
To lead his armed Vassallage abroad."

So saying, each departed; fell again
The ancient silence on the solemn place. 290

Together from the forest pass'd the friends,
Samor and Elidure; below their way
Went wandering on through flowery meads, or sank
Beneath green arches dim of beechen shade.
Around the golden hills in summer wealth 295
Bask'd in the sunshine; on a river bank
Long gleaming down its woodland course, repos'd
Many a white hamlet: even fierce shrines of war
Wore aspect mild of peace; towers dark of yore
And rugged in the Roman war array, 300

With wanton ivy and gray moss o'ergrown,
Their green crowns melted in the azure heavens.

“ Oh grief! o'er yon fair meads and smiling lawns
Must steeds of carnage batten, men of blood
Their fell magnificence of murderous pomp 305
Pavilion in yon placid groves of peace.
The blood-thirst savages of wood and air,
In meet abodes of wilderness and woe,
Shroud their abhorred revels; the gaunt wolf
Prowls gloomy o'er the wintry blasted heath; 310
Brood desolate on some bare mountain peak
Raven and screaming vulture. Man, fell man,
Envious of bliss he scorns, 'mid haunts of peace,
Spots fair and blissful, the rare stars of earth,
Plays ever his foul game of spoil and death, 315
Ruthless, then vaunts himself Creation's pride,
Supreme o'er all alone in deeds of blood.”

Thus Elidure; him Samor, from deep trance
Wakening, address: “ Soft man of peace, my prayer
Would ask of heaven no theatre of strife 320
Save yon fair plain, there forth the weak would start
In the tumultuous valour of despair,

The timorous proudly tower in scorn of death :
There, where each tree, each dell, each grassy knoll,
Lovely from memory of some past delight, 325
Is kindred to the soul; his house of prayer,
The altar of his bridal vow, the font
Of his sweet infants baptism, kindred all,
Holiest and last, his fathers peaceful graves :
Oh, were all Britain, like yon beauteous plain, 330
Blissful and free, that angels there might walk
Forgetful of their heavenly bowers of light,
Friend of my boyhood, these all-conquering foes,
Who fetter the free winds, and ride the sea
Kingly, their menacing prow would turn aloof, 335
And bitterly, in baffled lust of prey,
Curse the proud happiness that mock'd their might."

Lo, ere he paus'd, gay files of dazzling light
Slow o'er the plain advancing, indistinct
From their full brightness, gradual the long blaze 340
Broke into form, and lance and bow and helm,
Standard and streamer, chariot and fair steed,
Start from the mingled splendour. On their height
Unseen, the Chieftains watch'd the winding pomp.

And all before the azure-vested Bards 345
From glancing instruments shook bridal glee.
Then came the gorgeous chariots, rough with gold,
And steeds their proud heads nodding with rich weight
Of frontlet wreathed with flowers and shadowy plumes;
Therein sate ladies robed in costly state, 350
Each like a Queen; the noble charioteers,
Briton in garb, with purple mantle loose,
O'er steel, in network bright, or scale o'er scale,
Glittering, and aventayle barr'd close and firm,
As yet the gaudy traitors shamed to meet 355
The cold keen glance of countryman betray'd.
Dark in their iron arms, some wildly girt
With Caledonian spoils, their yellow hair
Down from the casque in broad luxuriant flow
Spreading, and lofty banner wide display'd, 360
Whereon a milk-white courser reinless shone,
Paced forth the Saxon warriors. High o'er all,
Tempestuous Horsa, chafing his hot steed,
And Hengist with his wreath of amber beads,*

* He is so decorated by the Welsh Poets. See Transl. of the Brut of Tysilio, by Peter Roberts.

His hoary strength, in spite of age or toil, 365

A tower of might: with that tall grove of spears,

Circled, and rampire close of serried shields,

The bridegroom Monarch rode, his bright attire

Peaceful, as fitting nuptial pomp, his robe

Rich-floating strew'd the earth with purple shade, 370

And on his lofty brow a regal crown,

Bright as a wreath of sunbeams; high his arm

The ivory sceptre bore of kingly sway:

Yet who his mien and bearing watch'd had seen

Dim gleam of jealous steel, or lurking mail 375

Beneath those glorious trappings, for his gaze,

Now jocund, chang'd anon to wandering stare,

Fearful and wild, as the still air were rife

With vengeful javelins showering death, his pace

Hurried, yet tardy, as of one who rides 380

O'er land still tottering with an earthquake shock,

And him beside, on snowy palfrey, deck'd

With silver bells its pendant mane profuse,

Of silver and of stainless ermin

The bright caparisons, and all her robes 385

White as of woven lily cups, the Bride

Majestic rode as on a moving throne.
Her sunbright hair she wav'd, and smil'd around,
As though, of less than kingly Paramour
Scornful, she said, Lo, Britain, through your land 390
I lead the enthralled Sovereign of your isle.

Yet so surpassing fair, brief instant wish'd
Those wrathful Briton Chiefs their leafy screen
A thin transparent cloud : of his high charge
Brief while forgetful, Samor stood entranced, 395
Fearing her form should fleet too swift away.

Came it from earth or air, yon savage shape,
His garb, if garb it be, of shaggy hair
Close folding o'er his dusky limbs, his locks
And waving matted beard like cypress boughs 400
On bleak heath swaying to the midnight storm?
Came he from yon deep wood ? On the light spray
No leaf is stirring. On the winged winds
Rode he ? No breeze awakes the noontide air.
'Mid that arm'd throng, dismaying, undismay'd, 405
With a strange eye dilated, as unus'd
To common sights of earth, and voice that seem'd
Rarely to hold discourse with human ears,

“ Joy,” and again, and thrice he uttered “ Joy.”
Cower’d Horsa on his palsied steed ; aghast, 410
As toiling to despise the thing he fear’d,
Sate Hengist. “ Joy to Bridegroom and to Bride!
Why should not man rejoice, and earth be glad?
Beyond the sphere of man, the round of earth,
There’s loud rejoicing, ’tis not in the heavens! 415
And many ministrant Angels shake their wings
In gladness, wings that are not plum’d with light.
The dead are jocund, not the dead in bliss.
Your couch is blest—by all whose blessings blast,
All things unlovely gratulate your love. 420
I see the nuptial pomp, the nuptial song
I hear, and full the pomp, for Hate, and Fear,
And excellent Dishonour, and bright Shame,
And rose-cheek’d Grief, and jovial Discontent,
And that majestic herald, Infamy, 425
And that high noble, Servitude, are there,
A blithesome troop, a gay and festive crew.
And the Land’s curses are the bridal hymn;
Sweetly and shrilly doth th’ accordant Isle
Imprecate the glad Hymenean song. 430

So joy again, I say, to Britain's King,
That taketh to his bosom Britain's fate,
Her beautiful destruction to his bed.
And joy to Britain's Queen, who bears her Lord
So bright a dow'ry and profuse, long years 435
Of war and havoc, and fair streams of blood,
And plenteous ruin, loss of crown and fame,
And full perdition of the immortal soul;
So thrice again I utter 'joy,' 'joy,' 'joy!'"

Then upsprung spear to strike, and bicker'd bow; 440
Ere spear could strike, or shaft could fly, the path
Was bare and vacant; shape nor sound remain'd;
Only the voice of Vortigern moan'd out,
"Merlin;"—and on the long procession past.

Down in a quiet dale, where beechen groves 445
With interchanging gold and glossy green
O'ermantled the smooth slopes, that fell around
Like a fair amphitheatre, beneath
A brook went wand'ring through fresh meadow banks,
With a cool summer dashing, here the Chiefs 450
The royal Hermit met, his gentle brow
Smooth as a slumbering Angel's plumes (effaced

All traces of this rude and wearing earth,
All brands of fiery passions, wild desires)
Wore that calm holiness the sainted dead 455
Smile on the visions of their lov'd on earth :
His life was like a sleep, with heavenly sights,
And harmonies, as of angelic sounds
Visited ever, nor his barren heart
Touch'd not the light affections, trembled not 460
His spirit with loves fervent swell, but all
Most wont to bear man's soul to earth, round him
As the thin morning clouds around the lark,
Gather'd, to float him upward to the heavens.

They at his feet down laid the kingly crown, 465
Fulfill'd their lofty mission. He, the while,
With that mild sadness he had watch'd the leaves
Drip from the sere autumnal bough, survey'd
Its stately glittering. " Men of earth, why mock,
With gaudy pageantry, and titled pomp, 470
The frail and transient pilgrims of this world.
The fading flag-flower on yon streamlet brink,
Were garland meeter for our mortal brows
Than yon rich blaze of gems." " Prince," Samor spake

“ Sweet is it down the silent vale of life 475

To glide away, of all but Heaven forgot,

Forgetting all but Heaven. Of king-born men,

Lords of mankind, high delegates of Heaven,

Loftier the doom, their rare prerogative

The luxury of conferring bliss. Oh, Prince, 480

Not by the stream to slumber, not to waste

Idly in joyous dreams the drowsy hours,

Hath Heaven thy kingly heritage ordain'd :

Set badge of Empery on thy brow: of God

The noblest service is to serve mankind, 485

To save a nation all a mortal's power,

To imitate the Saviour of the world.”

Calm answer'd Constans, “ Earth's exalted fame,
Grandeurs and glories gleam upon my soul

Like wintery sun-light on a plain of snow. 490

With prayers, a Hermit's arms, I aid your cause,

Farewell. Why pause ye, as to question more

The wisdom of my choice—lo, yon fair orb;

How spotless the fine azure where he holds

His secret palace, knows not his pure light 495

A stain of dimness, till th' abode of men

Pours o'er it its infectious mists." "Oh, Prince,
'Tis not the glory of that peerless light,
The barren glittering, the unfruitful waste
Of splendour on the still inanimate skies, 500
It is the life, the motion, and the joy
It breathes along this world of man, the broad
Munificence of blessing that awakes,
And in its rapturous gratitude springs up,
To glorify its bounteous source of pride." 505

"I see thy brow at thine own words on fire ;
Mine, Samor, yet is calm and cold." "Dost thou,
Constans, all title, claim, and right renounce
To Britain's throne?" "Even free as I renounce
The everlasting enemy of man." 510
"Will thy voice mingle with the general cry,
'Long live King Emrys?'—" "Long may Emrys live,
Even the eternal life beyond the grave."

"Yet one word more ; 'tis perilous in the storm
For the tall pine, nor less, in evil days, 515
For the high born and exalted of the state.
The Saxon blood-hounds are abroad for prey,
Seek thou some quiet solitude remote

Beyond their prowling range."—His arm to Heaven
Slowly uplifted, " Will they reach me there?" 520
Spake the meek Hermit, " there is rest secure."

They parted ; gentle Elidure alone,
Lingering with somewhat of an envious gaze,
View'd the deep quiet of that placid dell.

That night were seen along the dusky wood, 525
Of more than human stature moving forms,
Pale faces circled with black iron helmets,
Not of the Briton shape their garb or arms ;
Stealthy their pace and slow ; the peasants thought
Demons of evil that sad night had power, 530
And pray'd Heaven's grace to guard the saintly man.

At morn roved forth the peasant, down the dale
His dog went bounding to the Hermit's cell,
For all mute creatures loved the man of God.
A quick and desolate moaning nearer call'd 535
The peasant ; in officious grief the dog
Stood licking the cold hand that drooping hung
Lifeless ; the mild composure of his brow
On the cross rested ; praying he had died,
And his cold features yet were smiling prayer. 540

BOOK III.

ORIENT the bright-hair'd Charioteer of heaven
Pour'd daylight from his opal wheels, and struck
From the blue pavement of the sky clear flakes
Of azure light upon the Eastern sea.
And as the gray mists slowly curl'd away, 5
Rose the white cliffs of Kent, like palace fair,
Or fane of snowy marble, to enshrine
Blue Amphitrite, or the Sea-Gods old
Of Pagan mariner. Rode tall below
'The Saxon navy, as from midnight sleep 10
Wakening; the gray sails in the breeze of morn
'Gan tremble, gleaming oars flash in the spray.
The Sea Kings on the beach in parley stern
Were met, nor less than nation's doom and fate

Of kingdoms in their voice. Lo, in the midst 15
Stood huge Caswallon, word of mild salute
Deign'd not, but thus address the Ocean Lord.

“ Saxon! that o'er this fair and princely isle
Thou would'st win empire by the sword of war,
I marvel not, arraign not—'tis a dream, 20
Noble as o'er the heavens to walk abroad,
Companion of yon bright majestic sun.
Now by my glory, Saxon, mortal peer
Never Caswallon brook'd, save thee alone,
Thee, rival in his race of pride and power. 25
Arm'd with myself and all th' embattled North,
Not Roman Britons, sons of sires who dash'd
The purple Conquerors' haughty wall to earth,
And trampled their strewn ramparts; who ne'er deign'd
Barter for gaudy robe and marble pile, 30
Fierce naked freedom, and wild mountain cave,
Will I, and thou with Saxon spears begirt,
Bow this fair Britain to our lordly sway.
Then will we two, from pale perplexed earth
Seen, like twin meteors battling in high heaven, 35
On some lone eminence wage glorious strife,
Sole empire meed of conquest, of defeat

Utter annihilation, dark and full
Solace, and lofty comfort." Bold he paus'd,
Nor Hengist with pale sign of awe or dread, 40
Shamed the proud peerage, but with hardy speech
Guileful, won faith by seeming scorn of guile.

" Briton, to dare high deeds, and to disown,
Argues a wavering valour; the firm soul
Vaunts resolute its lofty dangerous scope. 45
To us our Gods o'er ocean and its shores
Kingly dominion and wide sway have given;
Were insult to our might and base reproach,
The freedom of one sea-girt isle, to thee
Honouring, not fearing, 'mid our prime we grant 50
Transcendant state, and eminence of power.
Now speed we of th' immortal Powers in Heaven,
Our high omniscient Fathers, to demand
If on the eternal shield of fate be graven
Ruin or Conquest, ere to bold emprise 55
We gird our brazen arms."—" Of mighty men
The Gods are mighty, whom the Saxon fears,
The paramount of men, 'twere-rash to scorn,
No calm and sunshine deities of peace."

So spake Caswallon, the mild faith of Christ 60

Scoffing with covert mockery ; thus th' All Wise
The imaginations of the proud on earth
Silent endures, till some brief point of time
Crumbles the high-built insolence of years.

“ Wilt thou behold our Gods ? ” fierce Horsa cried. 65

“ Then mount the bark, abroad her wings are spread,
And fleet along the obedient deep she speeds.

Fear not, proud Briton.” — “ Fear ! ” Caswallon cried ;

All iron as he stood, o'er surf, surge, wave

He bounded, hollow rang his heavy arms, 70

The bark her tall side to the troubled waves

Stoop'd groaning, nor delay'd the Ocean King.

“ Brother, farewell ! not singly the bold wolf

Scatters the mountain herd ; in grim repose

He rests expectant of his kindred troop, 75

Numberless from their shaggy dens they sweep,

And spacious o'er the antler'd monarch's realm

Spreads the wide ravage of their muster'd might.”

Stern Horsa bow'd assent, yet paus'd to watch

The proud bark tilting o'er the azure plain. 80

Stately she rode her path of light, her sails

In dalliance with the courteous winds : bold Man !

Well may thy full heart bound : in earth and air
The thunder-maned steed, the eagle thron'd
In the pavilion of his plumes, stand forth 85
Creation's glories ; but the noblest shape
That walks the deep thy workmanship sublime
Owneth, and starts from thee to life. Vaunt thou,
Yet humbly vaunt, all greatness is from God.

What dolphin glancing in his silver sport, 90
More graceful with translucent pinion parts
The liquid azure ? what Leviathan,
Huge heaving on the thick Norwegian foam,
More lordly than the white-wing'd bark, that wafts
The Sea King o'er his empire ? the fair waves 95
Rise in their gamesome turbulence, and pay
Wild homage to that royal Mariner.

The motion and the murmur of the deep,
The rushing of the silent, solemn sky,
Each in its deep abyss and pure expanse, 100
Seeming its secret mysteries of might,
Its ruling soul of everlasting change,
To veil from mortal knowledge, ever pour
O'er savage ev'n and rude tumultuous awe,

And exultation of a pleasing dread. 105
From dizzy notions of infinity,
Vague sense of ever-during sights and sounds,
Inactive though the body, the free spirit,
Vagrant along the illimitable void,
Perils uncouth and rich uncertainties 110
Ranges in restless round, plucks treasures rare,
That gem the caverns of the hoary deep,
Or bathes with sea-maids in their crystal bowers,
Or with gay creatures and fantastical
Peoples some dreamy land ; such joys of old 115
Lured the fierce Saxon from his darksome woods,
To launch along the vast and barren sea.
Such joys through this long voyage, wean'd brief while
From thoughts of war and war-won empire wide,
Haughty Caswallon, or from him assum'd 120
Fierce aspect, and a battailous character.
'Twas midnight, but a rich unnatural dawn
Sheets the fir'd Arctic heaven; forth springs an arch,
O'erspanning with a crystal pathway pure
The starry sky, as though for Gods to march, 125
With show of heavenly warfare daunting earth,

To that wild revel of the northern clouds ;
That now with broad and bannery light distinct,
Stream in their restless wavings to and fro,
While the sea billows gleam them mellow back ; 130
Anon like slender lances bright upstart,
And clash and cross with hurtle and with flash,
Tilting their airy tournament."—" Brave signs,"
Cried Hengist ; " lo, our Gods their standards rear,
And with glad omen of immortal strife 135
Salute our high-wing'd purpose."—" Yea (return'd
Caswallon) from mine own Helvellyn's brow,
Never a brighter conflict in the skies
Taught me that war was dear in Heaven : dream ye
Of tamer faith in gentle Southern skies 140
Your smooth and basking deities, our North
Wooes not with tender hues and sunny smiles
Soft worship, but emblazons all the air
With semblance of celestial strife, unveils
To us of their empyreal halls the pomp, 145
The secret majesty of godlike war."

Oh Lord of Lords ! incessant thus assail'd
That Pagan with his frantic railings Thee,

Th' Ineffable, yet worshipp'd of thy power
A faint and pale effect, reflection dim 150
From thy soul-blinding glories. On they sail'd,
Till o'er the dark deep now the wintry winds
Swept on their murky pinions, huge and high
The liquid legions of the main arose;
Like snow upon the sable pines, the foam 155
Hung hoary on their towered fronts; but slow,
Like a triumphant warrior, their bold bark
Wore onward, now upon the loftiest height
Shaking its streamers gay defiance, now
With brave devotion to the prone abyss 160
Down rushing, but the sternest Saxon cheek
Put not to shame that dauntless Landsman; he
In the strong passion of a new delight
On the fierce tumult feasts, and almost grieves,
When now beneath the haven rocks embayed, 165
The angry waves seem wearying to repose,
And the slack sails slow droop their flagging folds.
Their port was southward of that Strait, where bursts
The Baltic, with her massy waves of ice
Encumbering far and wide the Northern main. 170

South, North, and East, the rapid heralds speed,
Summoning from fen or forest, moor or wild,
Britain ! on thee to banquet, all who bathe
In Weser, Elbe, or Rhine, their saffron locks,
Hertog and Erle and King ; the huntsman bold 175
Of bear, or bison, o'er the quaking moss,
Or grim Viking, who but sues his Gods
For tempests, so upon some wealthy coast
Bursts unforeseen his midnight frigate fierce,
And freights its greedy hold with amplest spoil. 180

And now have Hengist and Caswallon climb'd
The chariot of the Oracle ; no wheels
Bear that strange car ; like wind along the sea,
It glides along the rapid rein deer's track.
Beauteous those gentle rein deer arch'd their necks, 185
And cast their palmy antlers back, and spread
Their broad red nostrils to the wind ; they hear
Old Hengist's voice, like arrows down the wind,
Like shot-stars through the welkin start they forth.
The car slides light, the deer bound fleet : they pass 190
Dark leagues of pine and fir, the filmy light,
Shivering with every motion of the wind

On their brown path lies tremulous, o'er them sails,
Heard through the dismal foliage hissing shrill,
And hoarser groaning of the swaying boughs, 195
The funeral descant of the ominous birds.
Around them the prophetic milk white steeds,*
Their necks yet virgin of the taming curb,
With all their loose long glories, arch, and pass
In solemn silence, and regardless paw 200
The unechoing earth. But that old German, set
Inflexible with bolder hand to draw
The veil of dusk futurity, disdains
These tamer omens. Still the car slides light,
The deer bound fleet, they pause not, save to quaff 205
The narrow cruise, to share their scanty store.
Like swallows o'er the glassy rivers smooth,
O'er the pellucid lake, with glittering breast
Yet wrinkled with its rippling waves, they skim,
The dead unstirring ocean bears them on, 210
Amid the immortal ice-hills wind they now.

* *Proprium gentis, equorum quoque præsagia ac monitus experiri: publice aluntur iisdem nemoribus ac lucis. Candidi, et nullo mortali opere contacti, quos pressos sacro curru sacerdos ac rex vel princeps civitatis comitantur, hinnitusque ac fremitus observant.* Tac. Germ.

In restless change, God's softer summer works
Glitter and fade, are born and die, but these,
Endiadem'd by undissolving snows,
High Potentates of winter's drear domain, 215
Accumulate their everlasting bulk,
Eternal and imperishable, stand
Amid Creation's swift inconstant round,
In majesty of silence undisturb'd,
Save when from their long-menacing brows they shake
The ruining Avalanche; unvisited 221
By motion, but of sailing clouds, when sleets
From their unwasting granary barb their darts,
And the grim North-wind loads his rimy wings.
Nor trace of man, save many a fathom deep, 225
Haply dark signs of some tall people strange,
That walk'd the infant earth, may shroud profound
Their legends inaccessible. They soar
In headlong precipice, or pyramid
Linking the earth and heaven, to which the piles 230
Where those Egyptian despots rot sublime,
Or even that frantic Babylonian tower,
Were frivolous domes for laughter and for scorn.

Nor wants soft interchange of vale, where smiles
White mimicry of foliage and thin flower. 235
Feathery and fanlike spreads the leafy ice,
With dropping cup, and roving tendril loose,
As though the glassy dew's o'er flower and herb
Their silken moisture had congeal'd, and yet
Within that slender veil their knots profuse 240
Blossom'd and blush'd with tender life, the couch
Less various where the fabled Zephyr fans
With his mild wings his Flora's bloomy locks;
But colourless and cold, these flowering vales
Seem meeter for decrepit Winter's head 245
To lie in numb repose. The car slides light,
The deer bound fleet, the long gray wilderness
Hath something of a roseate glimmering dim,
And widens still its pale expanse: when lo,
A light of azure, wavering to display 250
No sights, no shapes of darkness and of fear.
Tremblingly flash'd the inconstant meteor light,
Shewing thin forms, like virgins of this earth,
Save that all signs of human joy or grief,
The flush of passion, smile or tear had seem'd 255

On the fix'd brightness of each dazzling cheek,
Strange and unnatural : statues not unlike
By nature, in fantastic mood congeal'd
From purest snow, the fair of earth to shame,
Surpassing beauteous : breath of mortal life 260
Heaved not their bosoms, and no rosy blood
Tinged their full veins, yet mov'd they, and their steps
Were harmony. But three of that bright troop,
The loveliest and the wildest, stood aloof,
Enwrap by what in human form were like 265
Impulse divine, of their fine nature seem'd
The eternal instinct. Them no less survey'd
Caswallon with the knitted brow of scorn,
Bitter he spake—" No marvel Saxon souls
Revel in war's delights, so stern, so fierce 270
Their deities." Severe with wrath supprest,
As one ill-brooking that irreverent mirth
Scoff'd the wild lore, himself ne'er dar'd to doubt,
Answer'd the Son of Woden. " These, proud Chief,
So snowy, soft, and airy gentle, these 275
Are ministers of destiny and death,
The viewless Riders of the battle field :

When sounds the rushing of their sable steeds,
Down sink the summon'd mighty, and expand
Valhalla's cloudy portals; to their thrones 280
They the triumphant strangers lead, and pour
Lavish the eternal beverage of the Gods.
Mark thou yon bright-hair'd three? and would thy soul
Grasp the famed deeds of ancient time, or know
The master spirits of our present world. 285
Lo Gudur, she whose deep mysterious soul
Treasureth the past, and Rosta, who beholds
All acts and agents of this living earth;
She too is there before whose spacious sight
The years that have not been start up and live, 290
Who reads within the soul of man unborn
The unimagined purpose, of the sage
Skulda the sagest. Ask and thou shalt know."
—"I am not King of Britain, have not been,
Hateful the present and the past, my soul 295
Thirsteth for what shall be."—Then Hengist spake
In tone of mix'd authority and prayer,
"Queen of the Future, Valkyr, hear and speak,
Speak to the Son of Woden."—All the troop

Instant the thin bright air absorb'd, alone 300
Stood Skulda with her white hair waving wide,
As trembling on the verge of palpable being,
Ready to languish too in light away.

“ O'er Britain's isle doth Woden to his sons
Give empire?” She, but in no human tone, 305
E'er from the soul's emotion harsh or soft,
One glittering rich unvarying tone replied,
“ To thine, but not to thee.”—And, “ I am thine,”
Caswallon shouted loud, and sternly shook
His visionary sceptre. “ Whence the foe 310

Fatal to Hengist, and to Hengist's sway?”
“ Not from the Mountain, Saxon, from the Vale.”
Heard, heeded not the Mountain Chief that strain
Dire and ill-boding, or if heard, disdain'd 314

Adverse what prosperous seem'd a voice from Heaven.
“ By what rich rite,” he cried, “ may Briton Chief
Win favour from high Woden?”—“ Not the blood
Of steed or stag; a flower of earth must fade,
Blest o'er all virgins of the earth, the chaste,
The beautiful, by Heaven ordain'd to lead 320
The souls of valiant men to the pale hall

Of the Immortal; air her path; and Heaven
Her dwelling, with the fair and brave of earth
Her sole communion?"—"By my future throne,
Proud office for the daughter of a King! 325

A royal damsel, mine own blood, shall join
Your cloudy mysteries."—A hue like joy
Overspread all her face and form, while slow
Into the air she brighten'd, indistinct
Even now, and now invisible. Sad seem'd 330

In gloomy converse with his own dark mind
Old Hengist, nor despair'd that bold of soul,
In pride of human wisdom to revoke
The irrevocable, what himself deem'd fate,
By force or fraud t' o'ermaster or elude. 235

O glorious eminence of virtuous fame,
Glorious from peril! Warrior of the Vales,
Fate-signal'd Samor, vaunt not thou the love
Of a blind people, or weak prince: thy boast
The sworn unerring hate of Britain's foe. 340

So pass'd they forth, one in wild joy elate,
Already in his high disdainful thought
Wielding supremacy; each of fix'd fate
Nought heeding, but what fed his fierce desires.

The car slides light, the deer bound fleet, nor sun 345
Nor star in all the hazy heavens. Snow, snow,
Above, around, beneath. Unblinded yet,
Drive on the kingly charioteers, and shake
The showery plumage from their locks; fast fades
The long pale plain, the giant ice-hills sink, 350
Lakes, rivers, seas are patient of their speed,
Huge, dim, and dusk the forest pines rush back,
Now pant the brown deer by that ocean bay.

How desolate are now thy unplough'd waves,
Dark Baltic! wandering Elbe, thy icy breast 355
How silent of thy hunters. Sleep thou calm
Amid thy wanton vineyards, Gaul! no more
The blue-eyed Plunderers, bridging thy broad Rhine,
Waste thy inebriate harvests clustering pride.
Sing songs of joy, soft Italy! o'er thee 360
But Alaric and Attila drive on
Their chariot wheels of conquest, this their peer
In majesty of havoc, in renown
Of devastation, this, the fiercer third
Of human Furies, scap'st thou, therefore sing, 365
Soft Italy; for lo, at Hengist's call,
Vast Germany dispeoples her wide realm,

Deserts to silence and the beasts of game
 Her long and soundless forests. Seems the North
 The forge of Nations, in one fleet t' exhaust 370
 Her iron wealth of warriors ; helmed high
 The Suevian with his * towery knotted locks,
 Frisian and Scandinavian, Cimbrian rich
 In ancient vauntage of his sires, who clomb
 The Alpine snows, and shook free Rome with dread. 375
 And others nameless, numberless, sweep forth
 Their bands ; but three almost in nations came :
 The Jute, the Anglian, and the Saxon, each
 Leaving earth bare for many a lonesome league,
 His wives, his children, and his Gods embarks, 380
 On the fierce quest of peril and of power.

Then forth arose each Chieftain to salute
 The polestar of their baleful galaxy,
 Prime Architect of ruin : him who sway'd
 Their hot marauding, desultory strife 385
 To cool and steady warfare, of their limbs

* Insigne gentis obliquare crinem, nodoque substringere—In altitudinem
 quandam et terrorem, adituri bella, compta, ut hostium oculis, ornantur.
 Tac. Germ. 38.

'The domineering soul. As each past on
Shook up the Scald his harsh-strung shell, and cast
The war tones of each nation to the winds;
And Hengist with imperious flattery met 390
Each tall and titled Leader: "Art thou here,
Bold Frisian Hermengard! a broader isle
And fairer than thy azure Rhine laves round,
Spreads for thee her green vallies. How brook'st thou,
Strong Scandinavian Lodbrog, thou the Chief 395
Of the renown'd Viking, while the waves
So nobly riot with the wintry storms,
The tame and steadfast land? Now freely leap,
Arngrim, along thy Suevian forests brown
The bear and foam-tusk'd wild boar; let them leap, 400
A braver game is up on Britain's shore.
O Cerdic, gray in glory, young in power,
The Drave ran purple with thy boyish deeds,
A darker, redder dye, o'er silver Thames
Shall spread before thy ancient battle axe. 405
Ho, Offa, the rich-flowing mead hath worn
Your Jutland cups, beneath the British helms
Capacious goblets smooth and fair await

Offa's carousals. Heir of Cimbric fame,*
Frotho, how these, of late the Roman's slaves, 410
Will the race daunt, who set our Thor afront
The Roman's Capitolian Jove. And thou,
My gold-hair'd brother, are the British maids,
Or British warriors, Abisa, the first
In the fierce yearnings of thy boyish soul? 415
And lo the mighty Anglian; oh, unfold
Ocean more wide, more wealthy realms, too brief,
Too narrow for Argantyr's fame, the round
Of this the choice, the Sovereign of thine isles.

Thereat a sound of clattering shields arose, 420
As all the rocks around with one harsh rift
Had rent asunder: "Fair must be the land,
And brave the conquest, plenteous the renown,
Where Hengist leads strong Woden's sceptred sons!"

But inly laugh'd Caswallon, as he long'd 325
With each or all to match his Briton strength;
On the prophetic Valkyr thought, and glanced
Proud pity on the legends of their praise.

Advanced Argantyr, his bold grasp apart,

* Cimbri, parva nunc civitas, sed gloriâ ingens. Tac. Germ.

As peer his peer, led Hengist. "Thou and I, 430
Saxon, must have our compact; dark I know
Thy paths of strife, while my frank valour loves
The broad bright sunshine; thou by sleight and art
Min'st thy slow conquest; I with naked sword
Affront my peril, till its menacing height 435
Bow to the dust before me; for bold war,
For noonday battling, tender I mine arm,
But no allegiance own to subtle craft;
To peace Argantyr doth revolt when thou
Array'st stern war in the smooth garb of guile." 440
"The weak, Argantyr, and the friendless, need
Such politic skill; I take thee at thy word.
Who skulks a fox when he dare prowl a wolf?
Power charters force, where strong Argantyr stands
Is power.—And now aboard, brave Chiefs, aboard, 445
Or the soft spring o'ertakes our tardy keels,
And with her slothful breezes smooths the skies."

Wonderous that ocean armament; in shoals
Ride boat and bark, innumerable as the waves
That show white slender streaks of foam between 450
Their tawny sides, save here and there towers up

Some statclier admiral in lordly height
 O'er the frail comm'nalty, whose limber ribs
 Are the light wicker, cased with sturdy hides
 Their level bottoms smooth.* Oh, that frail Man, 455
 Loose-woven frame of dissoluble stuff,
 Uncharter'd from the boisterous license rude
 Of pitiless winds and fierce unfetter'd waves,
 To that unshackled libertine, wild Chance,
 Amenable, unguaranteed from burst 460
 And inroad of invading surge, that he,
 With such thin barrier between life and death,
 Should sit and skim along the ocean waste,
 Careless as maiden in a flowery field;
 Valour or phrenzy is it? They their toil 465
 Ply nimbly, and with gallant oar chastise
 The insurgent billows, their despotic sails
 Lords o'er the wild democracy of air.

Less vast, and mann'd with tamer, feebler spirits,

* Primum cana salix, madefacto vimine, parvam
 Texitur in puppim, cæsoque induta juvenco,
 Vectoris patiens tumidum super emicat amnem;
 Sic Venetus stagnante Pado, fusoque Britannus
 Navigat oceano.

LUCAN.

In later days, against our Virgin Queen, 470
The Spaniard's mad Armada; but the flag
Of Howard, and the Almighty's stormy hand,
Belied their braggard baptism, so they won
Brave conquest ! graves in ocean's barren caves,
Or on the whirlpool-girded Orcades. 475

But onward rides that Pagan fleet : young Spring
Hath scarcely tipt the leafless woods with green ;
Tyne's jetty tide is blanch'd with German oars.

Now whither with that dark-brow'd priest set forth
Old Hengist and the Briton Mountain Lord ? 480
Is it, fell Hengist, that Caswallon's name
Paragon thine in British hate, close link'd
By fellowship in nameless rites accurst,
Be hence more deeply, execrably thine ?
Or, from weak credence in such impious Gods, 485
Urgest thou that fell sacrifice ? Oh, where
The spotless Virgin doom'd (so wild the creed)
The Valkyr's airy troop to join, and glide
Immortal through Valhalla's cloudy halls ?

BOOK IV.

SUNK was the sun, and up the eastern heaven,
Like maiden on a lonely pilgrimage,
Moved the meek Star of Eve; the wandering air
Breathed odours; wood, and waveless lake, like man,
Slept, weary of the garish babbling day. 5

Dove of the wilderness, thy snowy wing
In slumber droops not; Lilian, thou alone,
'Mid the deep quiet, wakest. Dost thou rove,
Idolatress of yon majestic moon,
That like a crystal-throned queen in Heaven, 10
Seems with her present deity to hush
To beauteous adoration all the earth?
Might seem the solemn silent mountain tops
Stand up and worship, the translucent streams

Down th' hill sides glittering cherish the pure light 15

Beneath the shadowy foliage o'er them flung

At intervals; the lake, so silver white,

Glistens, all indistinct the snowy swans

Bask in the radiance cool: doth Lilian muse

To that apparent Queen her vesper hymn? 20

Nursling of solitude, her infant couch

Never did mother watch, within the grave

She slept unwaking; scornful turn'd aloof

Caswallon, of those pure instinctive joys

By father's felt, when playful infant grace, 25

Touch'd with a feminine softness, round the heart

Winds its light maze of undefin'd delight,

Contemptuous; he with haughty joy beheld

His boy, fair Malwyn, him in bossy shield

Rock'd proudly, him upbore to mountain steep, 30

Fierce and undaunted, for their dangerous nest

To battle with the eagle's clamorous brood.

But she the while from human tenderness

Estranged, and gentler feelings that light up

The cheek of youth with rosy joyous smile, 35

Like a forgotten lute, play'd on alone

By chance-caressing airs, amid the wild
Beauteously pale, and sadly playful grew,
A lonely child, by not one human heart
Belov'd, and loving none; nor strange, if learnt 40
Her native fond affections to embrace
Things senseless and inanimate : she lov'd
All flow'rets that with rich embroidery fair
Enamel the green earth, the odorous thyme,
Wild rose, and roving eglantine, nor spar'd 45
To mourn their fading forms with childish tears.
Gray birch and aspen light she lov'd, that droop
Fringing the crystal stream ; the sportive breeze
That wanton'd with her brown and glossy locks,
The sunbeam chequering the fresh bank. Ere dawn 50
Wandering, and wandering still at dewy eve,
By Glenderamakin's flower-empurpled marge,
Derwent's blue lake, or Greta's wildering glen.

Rare sound to her was human voice, scarce heard,
Save of her aged nurse, or shepherd maid 55
Soothing the child with simple tale or song.
Hence, all she knew of earthly hopes and fears,
Life's sins and sorrows; better known the voice

Belov'd of lark from misty morning cloud
Blithe carolling, and wild melodious notes 60
Heard mingling in the summer wood, or plaint,
By moonlight, of the lone night-warbling bird.
Nor they of love unconscious, all around
Fearless, familiar they their descants sweet
Tun'd emulous. Her knew all living shapes 65
That tenant wood or rock, dun roe or deer,
Sunning his dappled side at noontide crouch'd,
Courting her fond caress, nor fled her gaze
The brooding dove, but murmur'd sounds of joy.

One summer noon, the silvery birchen shade 70
Pendant above from dripping crag her brow
Veil'd from the fiery sunbeam, gems of spray
Gleam'd cool around with watery rainbow-light,
From a pure streamlet down its rocky bed
Dashing sweet music; she on mossy couch 75
Sate listening the blithe thrush, whose airy notes
In amorous contention Echo caught
Responsive. Sudden droop'd its flagging wing
The timorous bird of song, and fluttering sought
Soft refuge in the maiden's snowy breast. 80

She o'er the nestling prisoner folding light
Her careless vest, stood gazing, where, awhile
Dark in the sun-cloud's white, came fiercely down
A swooping falcon : at her sight it check'd,
Its keen eye bright with joy, th' admiring bird 85
Fearfully beauteous floated in the air,
Its silver wings, and glossy plumage gray,
Glanc'd in the sun light. Up the maiden gaz'd,
Smiling a pale and terrified delight,
And seem'd for that lov'd warbler in her breast 90
Beseeching mercy. 'Mid the green wood sank
Th' obedient bird ; she, joyous at his flight,
Her bosom half reveal'd, with gentle hand
Caressing smooth'd her captive's ruffled plumes.
Anon around a frighted thankful look 95
Glancing, what seem'd a human shape she saw,
Or more than human ; stately on his arm
The falcon sate, and proudly flapp'd his wings.
She turn'd to fly, yet fled not, turn'd to gaze,
Yet dared not raise her downcast eye ; she felt 100
Her warm cheek, why she knew not, blush, her hand
Unconscious closer drew her bosom's fold.

With accent mild the Stranger brief delay
Entreated; she, albeit his gentle words
Fell indistinct on her alarmed ear, 105
Listening delay'd, and still at fall of eve
Delay'd, e'en then with dim reverted eye,
Slow lingering on her winding homeward path.

No more in pomp of war, or vaulting steed,
Joyeth the Son of Vortigern, nor feast 110
With jocund harpings, and rich-jewell'd dames,
Outshining in their pride the starry heavens.

As fair the spring-flower's bloom, as graceful droops
The wild ash spray, as sweet the mountain bee
Murmurs, melodious breathes the twilight grove, 115
Unheard of her, unheeded, who erewhile
Visited, constant as the morning dew,
Those playmates and sweet sisters of her soul.
In one sole image sees the enamour'd maid
Concentrated all qualities of love, 120
All beauty, grace, and majesty. The step
Of tall stag prancing stately down the glen,
The keen bright fierceness of the eagle's glance,
And airy gentleness of timorous roe,

And, more than all, a voice more soothing soft 125
Than wild-bird's carol, or the murmuring brook,
With eloquence endued and melting words
So wond'rous ; though unheard since eve, the sounds
Come mingling with her midnight sleep, and make
The damask of her slumbering cheek grow warm. 130

And she is now beneath the moonlight rock,
Chiding the rippling waters that efface
That image on its azure breast distinct,
Garb, form, and feature, Vortimer, though mute,
As prodigal of fondness, his bright face 135
Looks up to her with glance of tenderer love,
Than wild-dove to its mate at earliest spring.

Oft hath that moonlight wax'd and wan'd, since last
He parted, all of him that could depart ;
Save that no distance could remove the words, 140
The look, the touch, that lives within her still,
The promise of return sworn on her lips.

And hark it comes, his steed along the glen ;
She o'er the lucid mirror stooping low,
'Gins prank her dark-brown tresses, bashful smiles 245
Of virgin vanity flit o'er her cheek,

Tinging its settled paleness. Now 'tis near,
But ne'er did Vortimer with iron hoof
Bruise the green flowery sward that Lilian loves.
A gentle frown of winning fond reproach 150
Arch'd her dark eyelash, as her head she turn'd,
Ah ! not on Vortimer. Her father stood
Before her, stern and dark, his trembling child
Cheer'd nor fond word, nor greeting kiss ; his arm
Clasp'd round her, on his steed again he sprung. 155
And on through moon-light and through shade he
spurr'd,
Gleam'd like a meteor's track his flinty road,
Like some rude hunter with a snow-white fawn,
His midnight prey. Anon, the mountain path
'Gan upward wind, the fiery courser paus'd 160
Breathless, and faintly raising her thin form;
" Oh, whither bear ye me ?" with panting voice,
Murmur'd. Caswallon spake unmov'd, " to death."
" Death, Father, death is comfortless and cold ?
Aye me ! when maiden dies, the smiling morn, 165
The wild birds singing on the twinkling spray,
Wake her no more ; the summer wind breathes soft,

Waving the fresh grass o'er her narrow bed,
Gladdening to all but her. Senseless and cold
She lies ; while all she lov'd, unheard, unseen, 170
Mourn round her." There broke off her faltering voice.
Dimly, with farewell glance, she rov'd around,
Never before so beautiful the lake
Like a new sky, distinct with stars, the groves,
Green banks and shadowy dells, her haunts of bliss, 175
Smil'd, ne'er before so lovely, their last smile ;
The fountains seem'd to wail, the twilight mists,
On the wet leaves were weeping all for her,
Had not her own tears blinded her ; there too
She surely had beheld a youthful form, 180
Wandering the solitary glen. But loud
The courser neigh'd, down bursting, wood and rock
Fly backward, the wide plain its weary length
Vainly outspreads ; and now 'tis midnight deep.
Ends at a narrow glen their fleet career ; 185
That narrow glen was pal'd with rude black rocks,
There slowly roll'd a brook its glassy depth ;
Now in the moon-beams white, now dark in gloom.
She liv'd, she breath'd, she felt, to her denied

That sole sad happiness the wretched know, 190
Ev'n from excess of feeling, not to feel.
Behold her gentle, delicate, and frail,
Where all around, through rifted rock and wood,
Grim features glare, huge helmed forms obscure
People the living gloom, with dreary light 195
Glimmering, as of the moon from iron arms
Coldly reflected, lovely stands she there,
Like a blest Angel 'mid th' accurst of Hell.
A voice is heard.—“ Lo, mighty Monarch, here
The stream of sacrifice ; to man alone 200
Fits the proud privilege of bloody death
By shaft or mortal steel ; to Hela's realm,
Unblooded, woundless, must the maid descend ;
So in the bright Valhalla shall she crown
For Woden and his Peers the cup of bliss. 205
Her white arms round her father's rugged neck
Winding with desperate fondness, she 'gan pour,
As to some dear, familiar, long-lov'd heart,
Most eloquent her inarticulate prayers.
Is the dew gleaming on his cheek ? or weeps 210
The savage and the stern, yet still her sire?

But some rude arm of one, whose dreadful face
 She dared not gaze on, seiz'd her. Gloomy stood,
 Folding his wolf-skin mantle to conceal
 The shuddering of his huge and mailed form, 215
 Caswallon. Then again the voice came forth,
 "Fast wanes the night, the Gods brook no delay,
 Monarch of Britain, speed." He, at that name
 Shaking all human from his soul, flung back
 The foldings of his robe, and stood elate, 220
 As haughty of some glorious deed, nor knew
 Barbarian blind as proud, who feels no more
 The mercies and affections of his kind,
 Casts off the image of God, a man of ill,
 With all his nature's earth, without its heaven. 225

A sound is in the silent night abroad,
 A sound of broken waters; rings of light
 Float o'er the dark stream, widening to the shore.*

* Homo autem quem sors immolandum obtulerat, in fontem qui ad locum
 sacrificiorum scaturiebat vivus immergebatur : qui si facile efflaret animam,
 faustum renunciabant sacerdotes votum : moxque inde ereptum in vicinum
 nemus, quod sacrum credebant, suspendentes, inter Deos translatum affir-
 mabant. Quo factum erat, ut beatum se crederet, qui eò immolatione e vivis

And lo, her re-appearing form, as soft
 As fountain Nymph by weary hunter seen, 230
 In the lone twilight glen; the moonlight gleam
 Falls tenderly on her beseeching face,
 Like th' halo of expiring Saint, she seems
 Lingerin' to lie upon the water top,
 As to enjoy once more that light belov'd; 235
 And tremulously mov'd her soundless lips
 As syllabing the name of Vortimer;
 Then deep she sank, and quiet the cold stream,
 Unconscious of its guilt, went eddying on,
 And look'd up lovely to the gazing moon. 240
 What deepest thoughts, young Vortimer, have place
 Within thy secret breast? thou slowly rid'st
 By Eamont's alder brink, thy silver arms
 Through the brown copse with moonshine glittering dim.
 Is't that late fight by Thanet, when the fire 245

excederet. Accidit nonnunquam reges ipsos simili sorte delectos victimari. Quod quia faustissimum regno libamen aestimabatur, totius populi multitudo cum summâ congratulatione tam insignes victimas prosequabantur. Enimvero sic defunctos non omnino mori, sed tam illos quam se ipsos immortales esse. Olaus Magnus, Book 3. cap. 6.

From thine and Horsa's steel, frequent and red,
Burnt the pale sea-spray? or thy stately charge,
With show of British war, to curb and check
The threatening Caledonian? or what bathes
Youth's cheek in bitterest and most gall-like tears; 250
Thy father's shame, the curse that, unredeem'd
By thy young valour, his once kingly name
Brands with the deep-sear'd characters of hate?

Or is 't that gentle Maid by Derwent lake,
Her flower-prankt tresses and her pale sweet smile?
How pleasant, after war and journeying fleet 256
To Britain's Northern realm, from Kent's white cliffs,
Once more to see her early gliding foot
Skimming the morning dews, to hear her voice,
As artless, as melodious, melt on air, 260
Among the wood-birds matins, to surprise
Thine own dear name upon her bashful lips!

What floateth down the stream a deep dead white
Amid the glittering moonshine, where the stream
Runs black beneath the thicket boughs, still white, 265
Still slowly drifting, like a dying swan,
In snowy beauty, on its watery bier?

Oh, were but Lilian here ! perchance its neck
 May struggle up, to the still waves to chaunt
 Its own soft requiem, the most gentle breath, 270
 Most fancifully, delicately sweet,
 That ever soothes the midnight's dewy calm.

Near, and more near, it takes a human shape ;
 Some luckless maiden ; haply her lov'd youth
 Awaits her at the well known place, upbraids 275
 Her broken faith, as fond as Vortimer,
 As full of love. 'Tis closer now ; he leaps
 From his high steed, he draws it to the shore.
 Scarce time for fancy or for fear, the moon
 Quench'd her broad light behind a rushing cloud, 280
 And utter darkness settled round. He sate
 In solitude, with that cold lifeless thing ;
 He dared not leave it, for a hideous thought
 Was in his brain.—“ Why is it like to thee,
 My Lilian ! be it any one but thou— 285
 Hopelessly cold, irrevocably cold :
 It cannot be, and yet 'twas like : her height,
 Her slender waist like Lilian's, and her hair
 As dainty soft, and trick'd with flowers ; 'tis she,

And I will kiss her, pardon if I err, 290

If stranger lips—round, smooth like thine; but oh!

So coldly passive! when we parted, thine

Thwarted me with a struggling bashfulness,

And, won at length, with meek surrender swell'd.

Wild and delirious fancy! many a maid 295

Hath full round lips, to trick the hair with flowers

'Tis common vanity. If dead, even dead,

So chilly senseless Lilian could not be

To Vortimer's embrace. Oh, but for light,

Though dim and scanty as a glow-worm's fire, 300

To make me surely, hopelessly undone!

Aught but this racking ignorance. Dawn forth,

Thou tortoise-footed sluggard, Morn! one beam,

Thou pitiless cold Moon!"—Morn dawn'd not yet,

And pale and thick remain'd the moonless sky. 305

Darkness around, the dead within his arms,

He sate, even like a poison'd man, that waits,

Yet haunted by a miserable hope,

The palpable cold sickness in his veins,

And yearns to live or die, scarce cares he which, 310

So one were certain. But when slow the dawn

Unveil'd its filmy light, he turn'd away
From that which might be Lilian's face, and pray'd
Even for the hateful, dun, uncertain gloom,
As now by habit the slow-creeping grief, 315
Winding like ivy round and round his heart,
Were rapture, and not lightly to be lost.
It seem'd unconsciously his hand held up,
Unconsciously declin'd his heavy eye,
Where slowly brighten'd on that lifeless face 320
The intrusive beauty; one tress lay across,
O'erspreading yet a thin and shadowy doubt;
Move it he dare not, but the officious wind
At length dispers'd it. As the thought, the fear
Were new, were sudden; like the lightning flash 325
That sears the infant in its mother's arms,
Smote on him the dire certainty. He clasp'd
Her damp dead cheek to his.—“ Thus, meet we thus,
Lilian, my Lilian, silent, strange, and cold?
I do not bid thee fondly gaze, nor ask 330
Long garrulous welcoming,—but speak, but move!
Lilian; ne'er thought I, I should live to loathe
Thy gentle presence,—Most ungrateful girl,

And I for thee forsook my warrior trust,
Was truant to my country's cause for thee. 335
By the green Tees my murmuring camp upbraids
My soft unwarlike absence—aye, upbraid !
Henceforth finds Fortune no where on this soul
To fasten misery on ; I laugh at Fate,
For I am past its wavering malice now. 340
Thinks she with hollow gauds of fame, and clang
Of cymbal praise, to lure me forth, a bland
And courteous parasite in her fond train ?
No; hang thou there, my helm, my broad-barr'd shield
Rust on yon bank, my sword, one duty more, 345
To shape the smooth turf for my Lilian's grave ;
Thy bridal bed, sweet Maid, it should have been,
Where thou and Vortimer had met. Thy grave
Shall be my field of fame, my wreath of pride
The flowers the courteous spring shall lavish there ;
And I'll have glory—in my depth of woe— 351
A wild and strange delight—in my despair—
Not yet, the cold earth must not part us yet,
One glimmer more from thine eye's dark-fring'd blue,
One throb, one tremor, though it be the last 355
In thy soft limbs—dead, sightless, icy dead !”—

O'er his lost Love, thus that sad Prince, undream'd
 The hell-born secret of her fate, arraign'd
 Blind Chance for keen-ey'd Man's earth-sully'ing sins.

But southward far the savage fleet bore on. 360
 On Flamborough-head the morning sun look'd dusk
 Through their dim sails; where Scarborough's naked foot
 Spurns back, and saith, "no further," to the waves,
 From cleft and cave the sullen sea birds sprang,
 Wheeling in air with dizzy flight, and shriek'd 365
 Their dreary fears abroad. The Shepherd, wont
 O'er level Lindesay view the watery plain,
 Blue trembling to the soft horizon's line,
 Sees, like a baleful portent from the heavens,
 That sable train of gloom warp slowly past. 370
 Th' Icenian coast (that scepter'd woman's realm,
 Bonduca, who from her fair body slaked
 The stain of Roman lust in Roman blood,)
 Looks haggard, with distracted faces wan,
 Hoar age, fair youth, the woman and the child, 375
 From beech or steep cliff, gazing now to Heaven,
 Now on that ocean army's watery march.

Oh Nelson! if the unborn soul distinct
 Amid the loose infinity of space,

Be visited by apparitions dim 380

Of this earth's fleeting Present, and inhale

Faint foretaste of its mortal passions, thou,

When, with usurping prow, that foreign fleet

Daunted thy Britain, thou didst surely yearn

To unordained maturity to force 385

Thy unripe being, to foreseize from Fate

Thy slow existence. Oh, the days must dawn,

When Saxon and when Briton, melted off

All feud, all hate, all discord, of their strength

And valour blent th' abstract and essence rich, 390

One sword, one name, one glory, and one God,

From their bright armoury of Captains, thee

Their chosen thunderbolt shall usher forth,

From the leagued Nations' frantic grasp to wrest

Britain's allotted sceptre of the sea. 395

A brighter and more British battlement,

Than tender forms of women, the pale dread

Of infants and decrepit eld, from Thames

To Thanet crown the pale-brow'd cliffs of Kent.

As when from Aulis that immortal fleet 400

Swept the Ægean, all the hollow beach,

And every Phrygian promontory glow'd
 With brazen battle, here the Morning's Son,
 Swarth Memnon, here the invulnerable strength
 Of Cynus, here the beardless Troilus, 405
 Unwounded by soft Cresseide's arrowy eyes;
 Here Hector, seeking through the watery route
 The tall Thessalian prow, with fatal thirst
 Furious even then, the silver-footed Queen
 To orphan of her heaven-soul'd boy. So broad, 410
 So brave in splendour tower'd the rampart bold
 Of British Warriors on that pallid shore.

On Thanet are the Sea King Brethren met.
 Their greeting in that fiercely sportive strain
 That, elevate with imminent success, 415
 Scoffs at past ill.—“ On Thanet's marge well met,
 Erle Horsa ; now meseems our spacious realm
 Is somewhat waste and shrunken, since we last
 View'd its fair confines, for such noble guests
 And numerous as attend our royal march, 420
 Our kingdom's harbours shew too close, our land
 Narrow and brief for such free spirits' range.
 Ill husbandry ! our fertile province wide

To barter for this spare and meagre isle.
Horsa, for anchorage and breathing space 425
Our weary mariners must e'en go sue
Their gentle Briton neighbours; haply they,
Knowing our native courtesy, may cede
From their abundance some fair leagues of earth.

“ Ingrate and blind (cried Horsa), they forswear 430
Our mild dominion ; to their King's behest
Rebellious, they proclaim the British earth
The undivided, indivisible right
Of their old British sires, nor may't descend
Sever'd and mutilate to their British sons. 435
They shook not off the Roman's gentle sway,
To slave it to Barbarians. Specious terms,
And with such cogent arguments enforc'd,
We were fain shroud us in this narrow isle
From such hot disputants ; a desperate spirit 440
Was that old Cæsar, who first planted here
The tree of conquest.”—“ Holds the King his faith ?”
“ Oh, thy fair daughter hath a soft-link'd chain
For the old royal Lion ; he obeys,
Like a slim greyhound in a silken leash, 445

Her eye-won empire. But there walks abroad
A youngling of the brood ; no blood but mine
Might flesh the ravine of his dainty jaws.
This Vortimer, this bright-ey'd, beardless boy,
Aye, front to front. I met him, but their bands 450
Rent us asunder, and my crest-lopp'd helm,
My scatter'd blood, past unaveng'd. Now earth
Swallow me in my wrath, heaven's bolt sear up
My constant heart, if I forget thee, Boy,
Nor shear the gay sprouts of thy budding fame !" 455
" A child their mightiest !"—" Scornful Hengist, no ;
A manlier spirit rideth the fierce storm,
One in whom bravery and counsel vie
For excellence : wild battle wears the shape
His will ordains ; and if the rebel swerve, 460
He forceth it with his strong sword t'obey
His high behest, and take the fate he gives."
" His name—his name !"—" The Chieftain of the Vales,
So sounds his title."—Then a bitter groan,
'Twere hard to tell from what bad passion, hate 465
Or dread, or hideous hope, from Hengist's breast
Burst forth ; with his mail'd hand he clasp'd his head,

As though to mould the discord of his thoughts
To one strong mass : then, as the birth were ripe,
A light and laughing carelessness relax'd 470
Those knitted furrows, seem'd his eager soul
Clasp'd the dim future with a wanton joy.

But on the mainland, in sad council, meet
The Baronage of Britain, timorous hearts
In hollow unsubstantial valour trick'd, 475
While those who dare shew fear, fear undisguis'd.
Their first fierce rush of courage pass'd, like flame
The mountain heath devouring, with fleet blaze,
But transitory ; they of generous thoughts,
Of appetites whose sole rich draught is fame, 480
Wanting the steadfast fuel, the strong wind
Wanting of love devotional, heart-deep
To their own native land, that passion proud
That is all passions, that hath breath to fan
To a broad light beyond the noon-day Sun 485
The waning embers of faint zeal ; they hence
Powerful but now with gallant charge to sweep
From Kent's fair valleys Horsa's Saxon train,
Downcast in mien and mind, with prospect sad
Now count that countless navy's gathering sails. 490

Not now the rapture and the restlessness,
The riding and the racing, burst and shock,
And sudden triumph, or as sudden death ;
Now long, long wasting of the limbs and life,
The circumspect cold strife, drear march, long watch,
Forepinning day, and vigilant sleepless night, 496
Eternal and interminable war,
Before them spreads its comfortless wide tract.
Gone all soft joys, all courtly luxuries gone :
The languor of the bath, the harp, the song 500
By twilight in the Lady's sleepless porch,
The loitering in the sunny colonnade,
The circus and the theatre, the feast
Usurping the mild midnight's solemn hours ;
From holier hearts, the chapel and the prayer, 505
The matins, and melodious vesper hymn,
The bridal with its gay and jocund route,
The baptism with its revel, gone—all gone.
The burial on cold battle field, unhymn'd,
Unmourn'd, untomb'd ; nor taper, tear, nor rite : 510
Gentle commercing between God and man
Broke off, save hasty prayer ere battle morn,
Cold orison upon the midnight watch.

Sole pillar of the quaking temple, firm,
Inflexible, on the foundation deep 515
Of his broad spirit, Samor bears the weight
Of imminent danger, and his magic voice
With shame, with praise, with soothing, and with scorn,
Scatters the languid mist, that wreathes their souls,
And from their blanch'd cheeks drives the white dismay.

What ho ! a trumpet from the Thanet shore, 521
Truce for the Saxon's embassy ; his hand
Outholding the white wand of peace, comes on
Old Cerdic, and before the assemblage proud
Speaks frank and bold that gray Plenipotent. 525

“ Britons, most strange ’twill sound, while our vast fleet
Affronts your pale cliffs with fierce shew of war,
Yet would we peace with Britain. Deem not this,
In the blown arrogance of brief success,
The hard-wrung cowering of faint fear ; look round 530
Your own brief camp, then gaze abroad, our sails
Outnumber your thin helms, and that pale fear
Is not familiar with our German souls.
This know ye further, what we Saxons dare,
That dare we nobly, openly. Far south 535

A rich and wanton land its champaign green
Spreads to the sun, there all the basking hills
Glow with the red wine, there the fresh air floats
So fragrant, that 'tis pleasure but to breathe,
Aye, one blue summer, in the cloudless skies; 540
And our old Bards have legends, how of yore
From that soft land bright eagles, fledged with gold,
Danube or Rhine o'erflew, their Cæsars fired
Our holy groves with insolent flames, and girt
Our fierce free foresters with slavish chains, 545
That scarce bold Herman rent their massive links.
Not to despoil a mild and gentle isle,
For full fierce vengeance on Imperial Rome
Pours forth embattled Germany. Then hear,
Brave Islanders ! our Saxon terms of peace : 550
For this fair province, our's by royal boon
Of your King, Vortigern, give plenteous gold,
And with it take the gift, that deepest wrings
Our German souls to part with, our revenge.
With most unwonted patience will we bear 555
Erle Horsa's camp with fierce assault o'er-borne,
And British wolves full-gorged with Saxon gore.

Then not as foes, but friends, we disembark
Our sea-worn crews, ourselves, the Chiefs of war,
In solemn festival to your high Lords,
Pledge on the compact our unwavering faith.
But if ye still with lavish thirst pursue
War's crimson goblets, freely let them flow.
If the fierce pastime of the fire and sword
Be jocund to ye, ho, let slip the game.
Your city walls are not so airy high,
But our fleet flames may climb their dizzy towers,
And revel on their pinnacles of pride;
Your breastplates not so adamant proof,
But our keen falchions to your hearts may find
A direful passage. And not we alone,
Caswallon, at our call, o'er the wide North
Wakes the hoarse music of his rushing cars;
Then choose your bride, oh Britons, lo, each courts
Your arms with rival beauties, Peace and War.
Thus half in courtesy, defiant half,
To wait their answer he withdrew. Ere died
His voice, ere from a single lip assent
Had parted, Samor rose, and cried aloud—

“ Britons ! oh Britons ! hinds fear fawning wolves, 580
 The peasant flies the snake that smoothly coils
 Round his numb foot its gay enamell’d rings ;
 I dread a peaceful Saxon. ’Tis too rare,
 Prodigious, and unnatural, like a star
 Seen in the noon day. Was’t for this, for this 585
 Round Vortigern’s tame soul that proud-ey’d Queen
 Wound her voluptuous trammels ? did the meek,
 The hermit Constans, bleed for this ? Oh, Peace
 Is like the rain from heaven, the clouds must burst
 Ere earth smile lovely with its lucid dew. 590
 Peace must be won by war, swords, swords alone
 Work the strong treaty. Shall our slaves, that sold
 Their blood, their lives unto us for base hire,
 On our fair provinces set now their price ?
 Nor feast, nor metal give we, but cold steel ! 595
 Give gold ! as wisely might the miser lead
 The robber to his treasury, and then cry,
 “ Go hence, and plunder ; ” ’twere to tempt, to bribe
 The undream’d perjury, and spread a lure,
 To bring the parted spoiler swiftly back. 600
 Outnumber us ! and are we sunk so low

To count our valour by our helmet crests ?—
Oh, every soul that loves his native land,
It is a legion ; where the fire shall sear
The hydra heads of Liberty ? Our earth 605
Shall burst to bearing of as boon a crop
Of sworded soldiers, as of bladed grass,
And all our hills branch out in groves of steel.
So thought our fathers, so they bravely strove
For the bleak freedom of their steamy moors, 610
Their black oaks' fruitage coarse, and rites uncouth
Of Druid, by the beal-fire's lurid flame.
But we, less drossy beings, filter'd off
Our natures rude and gross, create anew
Souls of fine wants, and delicate desires, 615
Rich in the fair civilities of life,
Endued with sensitiveness keen and clear
Of earth's best pleasures, shall we tamely yield
Our beauteous Britain, our own pleasant isle,
To dreary-soul'd Barbarians ? 'Tis not now 620
Merely to 'scape the heaven-branded name of slaves,
For license to breathe where we choose, and wield
At our own wayward will unfetter'd limbs.

Oh, if we fail, free Christians must sink down
To Heathen slaves, our gilded palace roofs 625
Shout the loose riot of new Lords, our wives
Be like base plunder, vilely bought and sold ;
Worse shame ! worse sin ! the murky Heathen groves
O'er our fall'n Churches their pale gloom advance ;
Our holy air go hot and reeking up 630
With impious incense to blood-beverag'd Gods ;
The deep damnation of a Pagan creed
Rot in our children's souls ! Then be our peace
Not hasty, as of timorous souls that snatch
At every feeble reed, but stoop we to it 635
As with a conqueror's pride, with steel-glov'd hand
Seal our stern treaty. So if they depart,
And with their spread sails hunt their mad emprise ;
But while one prow dash menace on our shore,
Our earth be patient of one armed hoof, 640
Tame treaty, temporizing truce, avaunt !
The foreign banner that usurps our winds,
Be it a foe, strange steel that doth divert
One ray of sunlight from our shores, be that
The scope and centre of all British swords. 645

So build we up our peace on the strong rock
Of brave defiance, cement it with scorn,
Set bright-arm'd Valour in its jealous porch,
Bold warden; from our own intrinsic strength,
Not from the mercy of our foes, be free."— 650

Oh the soul's fire, of that swift element
Th' intensest, broadest spreads and nimblest mounts,
With flaky fierce contagion; it hath caught
In that Baronial conclave, it hath blazed.
But then rose Elidure, with bashful mien, 655
Into himself half shrinking, from his lips
The dewy words dropt, delicate and round,
And crept into the chambers of the soul,
Like the bee's liquid honey :—" And thou too,
Enamour'd of this gaudy murderer, War! 660
Samor, in hunger's meagre hour who scorns
A fair-skin'd fruit, because its inward pulp
May be or black or hollow? this bland Peace
May be a rich-rob'd evil; war, stern war,
Wears manifest its hideousness, and bares 665
Deformities the Sun shrinks to behold.
Because 'tis in the wanton roll of chance

That he may die, who desperately leaps
Into the pit, with mad untimely arms
• To clasp annihilation? Were no path 670
But through the grim and haunted wilds of strife,
To the mild shrine of peace, maids would not wear
Their bridal chaplets with more joy, than I
Th' oppressive morion: then th' old vaunt were wise,
To live in freedom, or for freedom die. 675
Then would I too dissemble, with vain boast,
Our island's weakness; wear an iron front,
Though all within were silken, soft, and smooth.
For what are we, slight sunshine birds, thin-plum'd,
For dalliance with the mild, luxurious airs, 680
To grapple with these vultures, whose broad vans,
Strung with their icy tempests, but with wind
Of their forth rushing down would swoop us? Then,
Then, Samor, eminent in strength and power,
It were most proud for thee alone to break 685
The hot assault, with single arm t' arrest
The driving ruin—ruin, ah! too sure.
Oh, t'were most proud; to us sad comfort; sunk,
Amere'd of all our fair, smooth sliding hours,

Our rich abodes the wandering war-flame's feast. 690

Samor, our fathers fear'd not death ; cast off

Most careless their coarse lives ; with nought to lose,

They fear'd no loss ; our breathing is too rich,

Too precious this our sensitive warm mould,

Its joyances, affections, hopes, desires, 695

For such light venture. Oh, then, be we not

Most wretched from the fear of wretchedness ?

If war must be, in God's name let war be ;

But, oh, with clinging hand, with lingering love,

Clasp we our mistress, Peace. Gold ! what is gold ? 700

My fair and wealthy palace set to sale,

Cast me a beggar to the elements' scorn ;

But leave me peace, oh, leave my country peace,

And I will call it mercy, bounty, love !"—

So spake he, with vain shew of public zeal 705

Blazoning his weak intent ; and so prevail'd

His loose and languid eloquence. Each rent

The golden frontlet from his helm, cast down

His breastplate's golden scales, in contest free

Prodigal rivals at rich price to buy 710

That baleful merchandize, their country's shame.

Oh, where the royal Brethren now? the pride
Serene of Emrys? where thy Dragon crest,
Prince Uther? for thy voice, young Vortimer!
Seal, Samor, thy prophetic lips; in vain 715
The trumpet of thy warning shouts abroad.
Will the winds hear thee? will the rocks obey?
Or hearts than wind more light, than rocks more cold?

Gray Cerdic hath their faint award; they part
Jocund, and light of hope; but Samor grasp'd 720
The hand of Elidure:—"My childhood's friend,
I sue thee by all joys we two have shared,
Our interchange of souls, communion free
Of every thought and motion of our hearts,
Our infant pastimes, and our graver joys, 725
Go not thou to this feast."—"Doth Samor go?"
"Britain must have no danger, gentle friend,
That Samor shares not; thou art noted well
To hate the riotous and brawling feast.
With thy fond bride, thy Evelene, await 730
Silent the knowledge whether thou or I
Have err'd in this day's council."—"No, best friend,
Samor must have no danger Elidure

Shares not ; oh, why this cold and gloomy dread ?

In the deep centre of our isle be held 735

This dreaded banquet. Samor, ne'er thought I,

While my mild blood ran constant, thine would flag,

And curdle with the pallid frost of fear."

"Tis famed, that then, albeit amid the rush

Of clamorous joy unmark'd, in drearier days 740

Remember'd, signs on earth, and signs in heaven,

With loud and solemn interdict arraign'd

That hasty treaty ; maniacs kindled up

With horrible intelligence the pits

Of their deep hollow eyes, and meaning strange 745

Gave order to their wandering utterance : stream'd

Amid the dusky woods broad sheeted flames ;

The blue fires on the fen at noon-day danc'd

Their wavering morrice, and the bold ey'd wolves

Howl'd on the sun ! Life, ominous and uncouth, 750

Seiz'd upon ancient and forgotten things ;

The Cromlechs rock'd, the Druid circles wept

Cold ruddy dews ; as of that neighbouring feast

Conscious, the tall Stone Henge did shrilly shriek

As with a whirlwind, though no cloud was mov'd 755

In the still skies. A wailing, as of harps,
Sad with no mortal sorrow, sail'd abroad
Through the black oaks of Mona. Old deep graves
Were restless, and arm'd bones of buried men
Lay clattering in their stony cells. 'Twas faith, 760
White women upon sable steeds were seen
In fleet career 'neath the rank air; the earth
Gave up no echo to their noiseless feet,
And on them look'd the Moon with leprous light
Prodigious, haply like those slender shapes 765
In the ice desert by Caswallon seen.
From Mona to the snowy Dover cliffs,
From Skiddaw to St. Michael's vision'd mount,
Unknown from heaven, or earth, or nether pit,
Unknown or from the living or the dead, 770
From being of this world, or nature higher,
Pass'd one long shriek, whereat old Merlin leap'd
From his hoar haunt by Snowdon, and in dusk
And dreary descant mutter'd all abroad
What the thin air grew cold and dim to hear. 775
 'Tis said, rude portents in the Church of God,
With insolent noises, brake the holy calm.

The gray owl hooted at the noontide chaunt,
The young owl clamour'd at the matin song,
The pies and ravens, from the steeple top, 780
To the priest's Benedicite moan'd back
A sullen hoarse Amen, and obscene bats
Around the altar candlesticks did flap
Their leathern wings. Yea, from his stricken hand
The white-stol'd Bishop to the earth let fall 785
The consecrated chalice; th' holy wine
(Ineffable !) flow'd on the pavement stone.

BOOK V.

SWAN of the Ocean, on thy throne of waves
Exultant dost thou sit, thy mantling plumes
Ruffled with joy, thy pride of neck elate,
To hail fair Peace, like Angel visitant,
Descending, amid joy of earth and heaven, 5
To bless thy fair abode. The laughing skies
Look bright, oh, Britain ! on thy hour of bliss.
In sunshine fair the blithe and bounteous May
O'er hill and vale goes dancing ; blooming flowers
Under her wanton feet their dewy bells 10.
Shake joyous ; clouds of fragrance round her float.
City to city cries, and town to town
Wafting glad tidings : wide their flower-hung gates
Throw back the churches, resonant with pomp

Of priests and people, to the Lord their prayers 15

Pouring, the richest incense of pure hearts.

With garland and with song the maids go forth,

And mingle with the iron ranks of war

Their forms of melting softness ; gentle gales

Blow music o'er the festal land, from harp 20

And merry rebeck, till the floating air

Seem harmony : still all fierce sounds of war ;

No breath within the clarion's brazen throat ;

Soft slumber in the war-steed's drooping mane.

Not in the palace proud, or gorgeous hall, 25

The banqueting of Peace ; on Ambri plain

Glitter the white pavilions, to the sun

Their snowy pomp unfolding ; there the land

Pours its rejoicing multitudes to gaze,

Briton and Saxon, in majestic league, 30

Mingling their streaming banners blazon'd waves.

Blithe as a virgin bridal, rich and proud

As gorgeous triumph for fair kingdom won,

Flows forth the festal train : with arms elate

The mothers bear their infants to behold 35

That Hengist, whose harsh name erewhile their cheeks

Blanch'd to cold paleness; they their little hands
Clap, smiling, half delighted, half in dread.
Upon that hated head, from virgin hands,
Rain showers of bloom; beneath those hated feet 40
Is strewn a flowery pavement; harp and voice
Hymn blessings on the Saxon, late denounc'd
Th' implacable, inexorable foe.

Lordly they pass'd and lofty; other land
Save Britain, of such mighty despots proud, 45
Had made a boast of slavery; giant men
In soul as body. Not the Goth more dread,
Tall Alaric, who through imperial Rome
March'd conqueror, nor that later Orient chief,
Turban'd Mohammed, who o'er fall'n Byzance 50
His moony ensign planted: they, unarm'd,
Yet terrible, went haughty on, of power
A world to vanquish, not one narrow isle.

The hollow vault of heaven is rent with shouts,
Wild din and hurry of tumultuous joy 55
Waves the wide throng, for lo, in perfect strength,
Consummate height of manhood, but the glow,
The purple grace of youth, th' ambrosial hue

Of life's fresh morning, on his glossy hair,
His smooth and flushing features, Samor comes. 60
His name is on the lisp'ing infant's lips,
Floats on the maiden's song; him warrior men
Hail with proud crest elate; him present, deem
Peace timorous mercy on the invading foe.
Around the Kings of Britain, some her shame, 65
Downy and silken with luxurious ease,
Others more hardy, in whose valiant looks
Were freedom and command: of princely stem
Alone were absent the forsaken King
And his sad Son, and those twin royal youths, 70
Emrys and Uther; nor the Mountain Lord,
With that young eaglet of his race, deign share
The gaudy luxuries of peace; save these,
All Britain's valiance, pryncedom, and renown
March'd jubilant, with symphony and song. 75
Noon; from his high empyreal throne the Sun
Floods with broad light the living plain; more rich
Ne'er blaz'd his summer couch, when sea and sky,
In royal pomp of cloudy purple and gold,
Curtain his western chambers, breathing men 80

Gorgeous and numberless as those bright waves
Flash, in their motion, the quick light ; aloof
The banqueters, like Gods at nectar feast,
Sit sumptuous and pavilion'd ; all glad tones
From trembling string, or ravishing breath or voice, 85
In clouds of harmony melt up to Heaven ;
O'erwhelming splendour all of sight and sound,
One rich oppression of eye, ear, and mind.

Midnight, in darkness heavy, thick, and chill ;
In silence rigid, deep and breathless, stands 90
On the wide plain one lonely Man. Wan light,
From dim decaying firebrand in his grasp,
Feebly, with gleam inconstant, shews his mien
Hopeless, too haughty to despair : His eye,
As jealous of dark foe, goes wandering round : 95
Yet seems he one more fear'd than fearing ; rent
His robes' rich splendour ; and his ponderous arm,
With its wild weapon wearily declin'd,
Bears token of rude strife—though rude, though fierce,
By thy brow's pride, thou sad and stately Man ! 100
No faint inglorious craven hast thou shrunk,
In dread of death, or avarice base of blood.

At that dead hour, in Cæsar's city* gates
The Briton wives and mothers sate; at eve
They, from the plain, had homeward turn'd, to rock 105
Their infants' rosy sleep, or trim the couch
For him belov'd and loving; some, from joy
Sleepless, sate watching the gray shadows fall,
In luxury of impatience; slumbering some,
From weariness of pleasure, in light dreams 110
Liv'd o'er again the morning's jocund hours.

That hour, one horn with long and solemn blast
Went wailing up the heavens; less shrill, less drear,
Blew through the fatal Roncesvalles pass,
In after times, Roland's deep bugle, heard 115
Dolorous, so poets feign, on Paris' wall.
The air seem'd shivering where the knell pass'd on,
As with a cold wind shudder'd the thick trees.

But those fond women hail that brazen sound,
Joy's harbinger, sweet signal of return; 120
As the fond maid her lover's moonlight lute,
They drink in its dire harshness, busy round
Gazing, if aught neglected, careless aught

* Salisbury.—Sarisburga, qu. Cæsar's burga.

Belie the welcome, or to wakening child
Smile the glad tidings, or along the walls 125
People the dim air with the forms they love.
Oh, fond of fancy ! credulous of hope !
Ye hear but pleasure in that horn ; but see,
In the dim tumult of yon moving lights,
Swift homeward hurrying. Now the slow delay 130
Is but a lengthen'd rapture : steps are heard,
And figures indistinct are in the gloom
Advancing ; yet no festal pomp proclaim'd
By music's merry breath, but mute and slow,
As from dark funeral : haply wearied all 135
With the long revel day. But ye 'gin trace
Some well-known gesture, dear familiar step,
Each boastful of her lover's speedier pace.
Saxon the first, how wearily slow they pass !
Still are they Saxon, Saxon still, the last 140
Saxon ; in wonder they, nor yet in fear,
Question the dark air with their searching eyes,
Incredulous arraign the deepening gloom,
That with an envious melancholy shroud
Palls the long-look'd for, late-returning. Them, 145

Ah, deeper darkness covers ; to their homes
Never more to return ! Lo, all at once
The bloody knives, borne boastful, their red light
Flash murderous ; known is all ere aught is fear'd.
And yet are there unfaded on their brows 150
The garlands that ye fondly wove, the air
Not silent of your blessings. From these walls,
At morn, three hundred breathing valiant men
Went proudly forth—in solitary life
Moves o'er the plain that one majestic shape, 155
Like Spirit of Vengeance o'er some ghastly land
That scoff'd erewhile, in high portentous guilt,
The slumbering of God's wrath, now blasted lies,
Infecting with the ashes of its wreck
The late chastising heavens. So lone, so dark, 160
But pale with human sorrows at his heart,
The King of that Bright City in the Vales,
Walks the waste gloom, around him the cold winds
Speak voices from the dead, and oft he turns,
Brandishing defiance on the air, and smites 165
Some seeming Saxon with his smouldering brand.
Now rests he in that old mysterious ring,

The dateless and the numberless Stonehenge,
That is, and hath been, whence or how, none knows.
But even the Master Druid with slow dread 170
Its dangerous precincts trod, though noontide bright
Revell'd in the rich heavens, and holiest harps
Purified the calm air : rose like the wreck
Of some old world the shadowy temple huge,
Shapeless magnificence ! here souls profane 175
Deem'd rites so potent held as made the oaks
Stand still and motionless 'mid the wild storm,
And with a light, nor of the stars nor moon,
Sheeted the midnight heavens : deem'd some, more sage,
Th' Invisible his cloudy presence here 180
Embodied, and with wisdom heavenly and high
Full feasted the tranced soul ; all the dire place
Fled, fearing more, unknowing what they fear'd.

Amid those stony giants that uptower
In massy darkness, or in the wind's rush 185
Seem swaying on their dizzy balance, stands,
If virtue of aught earthly may feel awe,
Awe-struck the Christian ; now his calmer soul
Had time for grief, for memory ; o'er him flows

Deep-lulling quiet ; here the light and gay 190
Had felt a motion on their lips like prayer,
Nor marvel then that holy thoughts oppress'd
With a full extacy the Christian soul.

“ Merciful ! by whose will mine arm hath pav'd
With the strewn corpses of my murtherous foes 195
A dismal passage, while around me Death
Mow'd Britain with his secret scythe ! oh God,
I thank thee, if I die, a warrior's death
May be my brave distinction : if this life
Be worthy thy upholding, though all lost, 200
The friendships and the prides, that made its course
Blissful and bright, I thank thee for my life :
Thank thee, that yet on British earth shall breathe
A Briton, resolute on that last crag,
That knows not the rude Saxon's tread, to rise 205
Erect in stately freedom, and o'er-brood
The dim and desert beacon of revenge.
Or deign'st thou this low frame of dust to choose
Thy minister of wrath, I not with prayer
Vain and presumptuous, summon from the clouds 210
Thy thunders, nor invoke prodigious Death

To smite my foes. Hopes perishable man,
At his wild bidding, thou the laws wilt burst,
Wherewith thou fetterest thy Omnipotence?
Harden to stern endurance these frail limbs, 215
With adamantine patience sheathe my soul,
That nor pale shrinking of the coward flesh,
Nor inward palsying swerve from its brave scope
Th' aspiring spirit; grant thou this sole prayer,
And I thus lone, thus desolate proclaim, 220
Single, yet dauntless, to yon Saxon host
Stubborn defiance, haughty to bear up
The wreck of Britain with unstooping neck."

Now over all the orient sky, the Morn
Spread rosy in her youth of light, as fair, 225
As bright her rising on this plain of death,
As yesterday, when festal multitudes
Greeted her dawn; so vain the boast of man,
That earth, and air, and sky, their mimic hues
Borrow from his fantastic woes and joys. 230

And o'er the plain began his lonely way
The Warrior, on his brow the unheeded wind
Fann'd freshness, and the wandering lark unheard,

Quiver'd her blithe song, like an airy voice,
Bathing in light. Anon a dale beneath 235
Open'd, and slow withdrew the misty veil
That o'er her hamlets roofs and bowery trees
Ting'd with a liquid azure the thin air.
Along the winding path he roves, that none,
Save feet habituate to its maze, could thread, 240
Heedless that here to Elidure's green home
He came, unweeting visitant. Within,
Breathless, as though she listen'd in her sleep,
Close to the door, as jealous lest some ear
Earlier than her own should catch the sound 245
Of Elidure's returning tread, or voice
Anticipate the welcome of her own,
Reclin'd the bride, soft Evelene. The step
Up from the pillowing hand her flushing cheek
Waken'd, or ere the threshold he o'erpast, 250
The form yet indistinct to her quick sight,
Murmur'd her fond upbraiding. "Truant Lord,
Art thou too chang'd, thou too of midnight feast
Enamour'd? time hath been the rosy cup,
Thou Saxon in thy revels, had look'd pale 255
To Evelene's cheek."—'Tis wretched solace, yet

'Tis solace in the drear extreme of grief,
To find one human heart whose deeper woe
Makes weakness of our wailing. Though alone
Of the fray's dizzy tumult lay distinct 260
Elidure's image on the Wanderer's soul,
His image as beneath the Saxon steel
Dying, he struggled back to life from joy
His stern friend to behold with fiery brand
Piercing his path of flight, less bitter seem'd 265
His cup of woe, when from him sprang that bride,
Nor knew him ; knew him but no Elidure.
Then sued for tidings, and with all her soul
Listen'd, but could not hear, mistrusting all
While yet but fearing, but when all assured, 270
Mistrusting even her fears, even then to hope
Clinging with desperate energy of soul.
Her Samor left in that dead night of mind,
When madness were a comfort, all wild whirl,
All dizzy hurry of rack'd sense were rich 275
Were rapturous to that blank and dismal void,
When one incessant miserable thought
Blends with the life, the being of the spirit.
Him scared no Saxon clarion, the drear blast

Winding of fleet pursuit ; came o'er his soul 280

His own, his wedded Emeric, her babes

Hushing, while greedily with ear and soul

She drinks each sound the busy babbling fame

Spreads on the wandering winds ; the fleetest steed

Of Elidure bestriding, still he moves 285

A tardy laggard to his soul's desire.

Sedulous each throug'd haunt of man avoids

His jealous speed, and still from town and tower

Came blithely forth the jubilant hymns of peace ;

Still unextinguish'd their glad brilliance, wan'd 290

In morn's gray mists the yellow festal fires.

Day pass'd, day sank, 'tis now the dewy eve,

Beneath him, in the soft and silent light,

Spread the fair Valleys, mead and flowery lawn

With their calm verdure interspers'd allay 295

The forest's ponderous blackness, or retire

Under the chequering umbrage of dim groves,

Whose shadows almost slumber : far beyond

Huge mountains, brightening in their secret glens,

Their cold peaks bathe in the rich setting sun. 300

Sweeps through the midst broad Severn, deep and dark,

His monarchy of waters, its full flow
Still widening, as he scorn'd to bear the main
Less tribute than a sea ; or inland roll'd
Ambitious ocean, of his tide to claim 305
The wealthy vassalage. High on its marge
Shone the Bright City, in her Roman pomp,
Of bath, and theatre, and basilic,
Smooth swelling dome, and spiring obelisk,
Glittering like those more soft and sunny towns 310
That bask beneath the azure southern skies
In marble majesty. Silent she stands
In the rich quiet of the golden light.
The banner on her walls its cumbrous folds
Droops motionless. But Samor turn'd aloof, 315
Where lordly his fair dwelling's long arcade
On its white shafts the tremulous glittering light
Cherish'd, and starry with the river dews
Its mantle of gay flowers, the odorous lawn
Down sloped, as in the limpid stream to bathe. 320
No watch-dog, with glad bark and fawning joy,
His Lord saluted. Samor mark'd it not.
No menial caught the slack rein from his hand.

He heeded not. No swift familiar step
Forth started at his coming ; face of joy 325
Brightened not—vacant all ; yet heeds he not.
No infants, in their giddy, tottering speed,
Clung round his knees. So early at their rest,
Thought the fond father. Emeric's chamber door
Stands open ; he but paused his name to hear 330
Low mingled with her murmur'd orisons :
All hush'd as in a tomb ; perchance she sleeps,
At his long absence heartsick. He the folds
Gently withdrawing of his nuptial bed,
As with the amorous violence of his lips 335
To wake her to delicious fear, bends down.
Cold, cold as marble, the forsaken bed
Received the fervent pressure. Back he sprung,
And strange, like one that moveth in his sleep,
Stood with loose arms and leaden listless gaze. 340
Unconscious, to the city walls, far seen
From that high chamber, rove his eyes : behold
Against the Sun's last light a wandering breeze
Swells up the heavy banner ; in the gleam
The White Horse of the Saxon shakes his mane. 345

Then felt he the blank silence, then perceiv'd
The tumult, and rude disarray that marr'd
The face of his fair dwelling. Forth he rush'd,
As eager that his soul at one wild draught
Might glut itself with perfect woe, all ill 350
Exhausted, laugh drain'd destiny to scorn.
Cradle and infants couch with frantic hand
Hurrying he explores, the sad chill void
Almost delights. Now on the river brink
He watches yon huge forms that pace the walls, 355
Saxon their long black lances, Saxon helms
Nod o'er their lofty brows terrific gloom.

Lo! at his feet, beneath a primrose bed,
Half veil'd, and branching alder that o'er-droop'd
Its dark green canopy, a slumbering child— 360
If slumber might be call'd, that but o'erspread
A wan disquiet o'er the wither'd cheek,
Chok'd the thin breath that through the pallid lip
Scarce struggled, clos'd not the soft sunken eye.
Well Samor knew her, of his love first pledge, 365
First, playfullest, and gentlest : he but late
Luxurious in the fulness of his woe,

Clings to this 'lorn hope, like a drowning man,
Not yet, not yet in this rude world alone.
Lavish of fond officious zeal, he bathes 370
With water from the stream her marble brow,
Chafes her ; and with his own warm breath recalls
The wandering life, that like a waning lamp
Glimmer'd anon, then faded : but when slow
Unfix'd her cold unmeaning eye regain'd 375
Brief consciousness, powerless her languid arm
Down fell again, half lifted in his hair
To wreath as it was wont, with effort faint
Strove her hard features for a woful smile :
And the vague murmurs of her lips 'gan fall 380
Intelligible to his ear alone.
“ And thou art come—too late—yet thou art come,”—
He soothing her with hope, he knew most false,
Slow modell'd from her broken faltering voice
One sad continuous story.—“ 'Twas at eve 385
We went to rest, I never slept so soft ;
Our mother lull'd us with assurance sweet
Of thy returning.—By and by I woke,
But the bright morning was not shining fair,

Nor the birds singing as they us'd. I saw, 390
By a dim dusky light, huge iron men
With hair like fire, and their fierce voices spake
Strange language: of my prayers I thought, and strove
My eyes to close, still those grim-visag'd men
Stood in the wavering darkness by the light 395
Of their blue weapons—then they went away.
I crept out to my mother's couch; she lay
Asleep, but not as I have seen her sleep,
When I have stol'n at morn to look on her,
And thou hast laid me by her quiet side. 400
She shiver'd in her sleeping, and her skin
Was chilly to the touch, yet, oh to sleep,
Even as she did, I long'd; for they came back,
Those shapes in all their darkness, all their light,
Before their rugged faces I felt cold 405
As in the snow time; my eyes could not see,
Oh, but I heard a dizzy sound, like shrieks
Of many voices all at once. I thought
Rude hands were busy on my mother's couch,
As though to bear her thence—yet woke she not. 410
Oh Father, I have never look'd on death,

But she was dead, I felt that she was dead.
I could not breathe, yet from my thirsty throat
My voice was bursting, but down o'er me fell
The foldings of the couch—long, long it seem'd, 415
Ere from that cumbrous weight I struggled forth,
Then all was silent, all except the dash
Of distant oars ; I cried aloud, and heard
But my own voice, I search'd, yet found I none;
Not one in all these wide and lofty halls, 420
My mother, my sweet brothers gone, all gone.
Almost I wish'd those fierce men might return
To bear me too in their dread arms away.
Hither I wander'd, for the river's sound
Was joyous to the silence that came cold 425
Over my bosom, since the Sun hath shone,
Yet it seem'd dark—but oh, 'tis darker now,
Darker, my Father, all within cold, cold.
The soft warmth of thy lips no more can reach
'This shuddering in my breast—yet kiss me still.'— 430
Vain, all in vain, that languid neck no more
Rises to meet his fondness, that pale hand
Drops from his shoulder, that wooed voice hath spent

Its last of sweetness: wanted this alone
That could enhance his agony, baffled hope. 435

Quiet and cool the deep tide at his feet
Rolls with a tranquil murmur ; one lone gleam
Still lingering from the sunken Sun, beneath
The moving surface, lightens its cold depth.
How pleasant in its secret caves to quench 440

The soul, the body's fever ; to cast off
This restless, trembling consciousness, that clings
Enamour'd to its anguish, sedulous
To nurse its own disquiet : not to feel,
Though cast by wandering waves on Emeric's grave ;
Though Saxon barks triumphant bound above, 446
To feel not, and have freedom though in death.

For why this barren wilderness of earth
Still haunt, man's pity, and the arch fiend's scoff ?
Why to the wearying wretchedness of life 450
Cling with a coward fondness ?—but a step
To quiet—to forgetfulness, a step.

But alien to proud Samor those bad thoughts
Startled his nature, burnt his soul with shame,
That such unholy musings dare intrude 455

On its sad sanctity ; upright he sprung ;
Oh, not in vain a Christian, with clench'd hand
And inward rack convulsive of chok'd pain,
Fore'd calmness to his brow : his hollow voice
Wrought to a mournful fortitude.—“ Oh thou, 460
Glorious in thy prosperity of crime,
Hengist, and thou that barter'st thy old fame
For sweet lascivious chambering, hast unking'd
Thy stately soul within the wreathing arms
Of that fair Saxon, in loose dalliance soft 465
To steep the inebriate sense, on Samor's state
Look, and be pale with envy ; he dare stand
Lofty beneath yon starry throne of God,
And bless him, that his fate is scant and poor
In joys like your's, by all your pomp, your bliss, 470
Made lovesick of his misery ; still he feels
The haughty solace of disdain ; still soothes
The madness of his grief by pitying you.
Nor yet, oh impotent of cruelty,
I am not utterly from this dark world 475
Estrang'd and outcast : gone, for ever gone,
Those exquisite mild luxuries of the heart,

That summer sunshine of the soul, sweet love,
That makes life what we deem of heaven ; remain
Hardier delights, severer joys. Oh reft 480
Of all thy brave, thy princely, of my faith,
Thou hast a deeper need—be thou my bride,
Oh Britain, to thy wreck I proudly wed
The sadness of my widowhood, and bid
Pale bridemaids to our nuptials, holy Wrath 485
And iron-handed Vengeance ; and invoke
Death, that dark minstrel from fast-slaughter'd mounds
Of Saxons, to awake our bridal hymn,
And spread for torchlight on our spousal eve
Wild gratulation of their funeral fires. 490

“ And thou, oh stainless denizen of heaven,
Soft soul of my lost Emeric, endure
Though jealous my new bride from thee bereave
The rude tumultuous day, the midnight hour
I consecrate to thee ; then slide thou down, 495
Like moonlight on the darkness' raven wing,
And oh, if human passion, human love,
Stain the pure essence of immortal spirits,
Leave heaven in heaven, earth's frailer loveliness

Resuming, chaste mild fondness, timorous warmth, 500
Visit my desert fancy. Him by day,
Savage and merciless, with soul of steel,
And pale brow cloudy with a nation's cares,
Shall midnight find an amorous dreamer fond,
A dotard on a dim unreal shade." 505

Now o'er what was the rosy, playful, warm,
Now pale, now changeless, icy cold, the maid
Whose blue eyes danc'd with rapture, whose light step
Was consort to the air-roving winds (half seal'd
That lustreless wan azure; stiff and damp 510
Those sprightly limbs) oft pausing as yet loath
To part from what he shudder'd to behold,
Heaps Samor the light earth; ere o'er her face
He plac'd the primrose knot, once stoop'd his lips,
And started to find cold what he knew dead. 515

Now closed that mournful office, nearing fast
Is heard a dash of oars, and at his side
Forth leap'd an armed Saxon, with rais'd arm
Menacing; but Samor down with scornful strength
The grim intruder dash'd to earth, and fix'd 520
His stern heel on his neck, and stood in act

The life to trample from the gasping trunk.
Sudden withdrawn his angry tread, he spake,
“ Thee first of Saxon race, thee last, this arm
Spares, not of milky mercy, but as meet 525
To minister my purpose; go unscath'd,
And tell to Hengist, tell thy Lord, who robs
The Lion's den, should chain the Lion first;
Add, Samor is abroad,”—Then to the boat
He sprang, and pass'd to Severn's western shore. 530

BOOK VI.

A voice, o'er all the waste and prostrate isle
Wandereth a valiant voice; the hill, the dale,
Forest and mountain, heath and ocean shore
Treasure its mystic murmurs; all the winds
From the bleak moody East to that soft gale 5
That wantons with the summer's dewy flowers,
Familiar its dark burthen waft abroad.

Is it an utterance of the earth? a sound
From the green barrows of the ancient dead?
Doth fierce Cassivelan's cold sleep disdain 10
That less than Cæsar with a master's step
Walk his free Britain? Doth thy restless grave,
Bonduca, to the slavish air burst ope,
And thou, amid the laggard cars of war,

Cry, "Harness and away!" But far and wide, 15
As when from marish dank, or quaking fen,
Venomous and vast the clouds uproll, and spread
Pale pestilence along the withering land,
So sweeps o'er all the isle his wasting bands
The conqueror Saxon; he, far worse, far worse 20
His drear contagion, that the body's strength
Wastes, and with feverish pallor overlays
The heaven-shap'd features; this the nobler soul,
With slavery's base sickliness attaints,
Making man's life more hideous than his death. 25
Thames rolls a Saxon tide; in vain delays
Deep Severn on Plinlimmon's summits rude
His narrow freedom, tame anon endures
Saxon dominion: high with arms uplift,
As he had march'd o'er necks of prostrate kings, 30
Caswallon on the southern shore of Trent
Drives onward, he nought deeming won, while aught
Remains unwon. But still that wonderous voice,
Like vulture in the grisly wake of war,
Hovers, and flings on air his descant strange, 35
"Vengeance and Vigilance!"—in van, in rear,

Around, above, beneath, the clouds of Heaven
Enshroud it in their misty folds; earth speaks
From all her caves, "Vengeance and Vigilance!"
Aye, at that sound the Briton crest assumes 40
High courage and heroic shame, he wears
With such bold mien his slavery, he might seem
Lord over fortune, and with calm disdain
He locks his fetters, like proud battle arms.
Without a foe o'er this wide land of foes 45
Marcheth the Saxon. City, tower, and fort
On their harsh hinge roll back their summon'd gates,
With such a sullen and reluctant jar,
Submission seems defiance. Though to fear
Impassive, scarce the Victor dare unfurl 50
Banner of conquest on the jealous air.
Less perilous were frantic strife, were wrath
Desperate of life, and blind to death, wild hate
Of being struck all heedless so it strike,
Than this high haughty misery, that fierce woe 55
Baffles by brave endurance, and confronts
With cold and stern contentedness all ill,
Outrage, and insult, ravage, rape, and wreck,

That dog barbaric Conquerors march of war.
 'Tis like the sultry silence, ushering forth 60
 The thunder's cloudy chariot, rather like
 The murky smothering of volcanic fire
 Within its rocky prison; forth anon
 Bursts the red captive, to the lurid heaven
 Upleaps, and with its surging dome of smoke 65
 Shuts from the pale world the meridian Sun.
 But in their camp, in fierce divan and full,
 The lordly robbers sate, assemblage proud,
 Ethling, and Erle, and King, for council met,
 For council and carousal;* so they deem'd 70
 The drunken sense would hardier daring grasp,
 And the bold revel of the blood, the soul
 Flush to more noble valiance, strong desire
 In fierce embrace to meet that mistress dark,
 Danger: Hoarse din of merriment, the air 75
 Smote with meet music blending loud and deep.

But Horsa lighting with disdainful mirth

* De pace denique ac bello plerumque in conviviis consultant; tanquam nullo magis tempore aut ad simplices cogitationes pateat animus, aut ad magnas incalescat. Tac. Germ.

His broad bright eye, 'gan scoff with rugged jest.

"Ill have we done, though for one sumptuous feast

Be our's this spacious isle, ill have we done ;— 80

That in our prodigal and heedless waste

Of those tall high-born Britons spared we none

To tilt at with our thirsty spears, and scare

The frost and slumber from our sluggish hearts.

Now hang we forth our banners to disport 85

In the smooth breeze, our armours steeled clasps

To summons soft of Lady's tender hands

Surrender ; or go joust the hardy oaks

For pastime. Oh, along these velvet plains

To prance 'mid timorous hinds with their pale souls 90

In their white faces, heralds crouching low,

With looks beseeching, voices meek, clasp'd hands ;

'Tis tame and wearisome as at dead noon.

To rock upon the flat and lazy sea."

"This too," cried hoary Cerdic ; "this bright sword

Loathes its long Christian fast, yet not despairs 96

Erewhile to glut with banquet rich and full

Its ravening blade ; for trust me, fiery Erle,

Many a fierce steed hath brook'd the brazen curb,

That chaf'd anon, from his high seat to dust 100
Hath shaken his pale rider ; Erle, I read
In yon bow'd foreheads sterner characters
Than abject, tame allegiance, homage base :
There the firm purpose, meditation deep,
And study of revenge ; the wand of peace 105
Is in their hands, but in their souls they grasp
The battle-axe and spear."—A bitter laugh
Came with the fierce reply, " Shall Horsa watch
The shiftings in the visage of a slave ;
I issue forth my mandate, and 'tis done, 110
Whether with cloudy or with sunshine brow
I know not and regard not."—Cerdic's voice,
Ruffled to somewhat of prophetic tone :
 " Not, Horsa, to the stones, the deaf dull stones,
Nor the cold current of the senseless winds 115
Speaks that wild orator, the Man, whose paths
Are hidden as the ways of fate, unknown
Who knoweth all, who seeth all unseen,
Nor like the lightning shaft his presence dread
Divulgeth, but to shatter, but to slay. 120
Whose breath beneath the soft dove's snowy down

A soul might breathe of valour to outsoar
The falcon's pitch of pride: I tell thee, Erle,
This soft effeminate Britain, to our sway
Gentle and pliant as a willow wand, 125
Will that dark Man uprear a ponderous Mace
To crush our infant empire."—"Man! hath man
Curdled the blood of Offa, made his soul
Patient of that pale trembling motion, fear,
And Offa live, live shameless of his shame, 130
Amid his peers with unblench'd front to say,
These knees have quail'd, these stubborn joints have felt
The aspin's coward fluttering, and the Sun
That saw his flight, hath seen not his revenge.
Cerdic, the name of perishable man 135
Thou dost belie, so titling beings dim;
Viewless and formless denizens of air,
That sport and dally with the human shape
Making of mortals to their mortal peers,
Dark things of doubt and danger. We had sworn, 140
Gurmund and Sigvart, Ælla, Attilar,
And other six, than whom no German arm
Sways heavier the long lance, nor German foot

Treads firmer battle's crimson paths, I speak,
Fiery-soul'd Horsa, to thy front; to thine, 145
High-sceptred Hengist! mortal steel we swore
Should choke that full-voic'd Wanderer's clamorous
breath.

Sage oath! as to adjure our souls, and vow
Th' irregular mad ocean our word "Peace"
Should hearken, and sleek smooth his cresting waves.

But gaily went we forth with brand and bow, 151
Like hunters to the chase, scoffing our prey.

'Now if he meet us in his mortal shape,
Let him melt back into his native air;

'Then shall he scape'—high o'er our path a rock 155
Hung beetling, from its summit came a voice,

'Behold him!'—with the voice a fragment vast,
An earthquake had been weak to hurl it forth;
Two stately necks to the low earth sank down,
And o'er them that huge mass lay stern and still, 160

Like an old giant's monument. But we
Leap'd onward, Ælla met the dark unknown,
Heavy with ruin hung his arm in air,
But in his valiant heart a javelin stood,

Drinking the crimson life. Still on we swept, 165
Many a wild league o'er moor and marish swamp,
Forest and wold, and still our pathway lay
O'er the warm corpses of our foremost peers.
Sole, sad survivors of our host, we came,
Sigvart and Offa ; on the giddy brink 170
Of precipice abrupt the Conqueror paus'd,
As weary with his prowess, our defeat,
To mock us with the calmness of his rest.
" Now come what will," cried Sigvart, " come what may,
Or thou, or I, or both."—Then on he sprung, 175
Yet not the more relax'd that shape of gloom
Its stern contemptuous quiet, wav'd his arm
With motion less of strife than proud command,
And then of Sigvart's fall the deep abyss
Sent up a hollow sound. I fled, proud Peers, 180
I say again, I fled, and, or disdain'd
That being dark a lone and single foe :
Or by the shielding of our mightier Gods
I 'scap'd—" I too (cried Hermingard), I too
Of that mysterious Wanderer have known 185
The might and savage mercy. I had stray'd

Into a fabric fair, of Christian Gods,
A fane it seem'd, rich-crested pillars rang'd
On either side, above the hollow roof
Aye lessening, seem'd to melt into the air 190
On which it floated.—High uprear'd there shone
An altar, bright with chalice, lamp, and cup
All of the flaming gold. I rush'd to seize,
An arm was on my neck, that dash'd me down
Like a soft infant ; then a vengeful voice 195
Struck on my dizzy hearing.—“ But thy blood
Would dye this holy pavement with foul stain,
Heathen, thy soul and mortal shape were rent
Asunder.”—As I fled, I turn'd—reclin'd
Low by that altar on his knees, all quench'd 200
Fierce wrath and fiery menace, drooping all
Stern pride of mastery, triumph, and high scorn
That wild Unknown, calm, not with weariness ;
Gentle, but not with sleep. Majestic light
Beam'd on the quiet of his heavenward brow, 205
Yet human tears stood glittering in his eyes.
My thoughts were vengeance, but the cold clear air
Went creeping up my veins, an awful frost

Drank up the languid current of my blood,
And unrevenged I fled that tranquil Man." 210

Upsprang young Abisa, and beauteous scorn
Curl'd his smooth cheek—" in tumult or in calm ;
But have he blood within his beating veins,
Mine is a steel of such a searching thirst,
'Twill drain its crimson source." " 'Thou ! wanton Boy,"
The pale laugh wrinkling on his swelling lip. 216
" 'Thou ! thou ! (cried Offa) with thy mother's milk
Yet white within thy beardless cheek."—" Proud Jute,
The stem of Woden is a mounting tree,
Its saplings soar to meet the golden Sun, 220
While tamer shrubs creep with base trail on earth.
Hengist, my King, my Brother ! by our Sire
I swear, that ne'er again metheglin cup
Shall sparkle on these lips, till I have met
This mystic deity of Offa's fear." 225

Then on the Monarch turn'd all eyes ; he sate
In darkness, or by chance, or art the lamps
Stream'd bright and yellow down the festal board
But fell no ray within his folded robe.
Yet wore not Hengist on his brow his soul, 230

High spake he from its cold and stately calm,
Law to the lawless, to the dauntless dread ;
But his were rarer qualities of power,
Dominion o'er himself; deep, deep within
Dwelt all the stormy passions ; by no eye 235
Pierc'd in its dark abiding lay the spirit
With all its shames and grandeurs, loves and hates,
And all its greedy family of lusts.
Though now there seem'd beneath his royal crown
A faint uncertain paleness, as of fear 240
Not wholly quell'd, and on his cheek and lip
Hover'd a quivering motion, ere he spake,
But cool his speech.—“ Presumptuous youth, thy oath
Though wild, is holy—Woden guard thee well.
Yet art thou sole in madness ? time hath been 245
When the brave phrenzy of rash daring spread
A broad contagious flame through all our camp ;
Till not a sword but sham'd its sluggish sheath,
Needed not Saxon king, as now, to gild
Fair danger ere it pleas'd, as now proclaim 250
Rich guerdon to the warrior, that aspires
To rival Woden's blood, and be the peer

Of Abisa in peril and renown.

More lofty duties fetter thee and me,

High Horsa"—(for the fiery warrior's hand 255

Had started to his sword's familiar hilt)

Rob we not of their fame the valiant Erles."

No seat was vacant, not a voice came forth,

As he were single in his shame sate each,

Nor dared on his compeers to look, in fear 260

Soul might be there more dauntless than his own.

Blank silence all ! but loud that silence spake.

Not vainly, Samor, worn thy title proud,

Avenger ! by thy country's Conquerors thou

Magnificently deified ; so soar'd 265

Thy mortal virtue o'er their tamer Gods.

Not that the vassal elements thy sway

Hearken'd, nor beings of the middle air

Stoop'd on their glistening wings to work thy will.

Avenger ! but for thee, the Almighty wrought 270

Most marv'lous, most mirac'lous ; in thy soul,

That nobler field, high wonders manifold

Laboured to light and lustre : for what thought

Unwing'd by inbreath'd Godhead e'er might dream

Of glory to be born from this broad night 275
Of desolation and deep darkness, strive
For faint, impalpable, and airy good,
Through the thick clouds of evil and of woe,
Strong, stately constant, like an eagle set
To drink the last light of the parting sun ? 280
What heart of earthly clay, that ne'er imbib'd
Holier and purer ether, might endure
Danger, dismay, despair, all ills, that wring
Within, and rack and rankle ? not alone
Fierce wrong and insult of triumphant foe, 285
But worse, far worse, from those our friends misdeem'd,
Pity of calm, cold cowards, or rude scorn
From sleek and smiling slaves ; or scoff and mock
At thy hard sufferings from those ingrate hearts
For whom thou suffer'st ; these the woes that wait 290
That nobly desperate, who with stedfast hand
The statue of his country's fame, down dash'd
And trampled by barbarian feet, ingrain'd
With the coarse dust and black, before the world
Would rear again to sov'reignty and state. 295
But thou didst strive and suffer, thou didst hope,

And therefore in thy dark and silent deeds
Beam'd manifest God's Spirit ; till in thee
Even the base body that e'er clogs and clouds
The nobler energies, its state infirm 300
Shook off, and by communion close assum'd
The soul's immortal essence, or the soul
A climate and peculiar atmosphere
Spread round its weaker instrument of power.
Hence human accidents of heat and cold, 305
Famine and thirst, wasting and weariness,
Fell light and thin upon thy tranquil frame,
Like flakes of snow upon th' unbroken lake ;
Thus didst thou pass most fearless, and most fear'd ; 310
By virtue, and thy foeman's dread, array'd
In attributes of strong divinity ;
Danger became thy safety, thy renown
Grew from thy utter desperate wretchedness.

But now the more enjoy'd that Saxon youth
His solitude of glory ; forth he springs 315
Hasty, lest valorous repentance fire
Some rival Erle of half his peril yet
To wrong him. In his tent, soft languid sounds

Expiring on her falling lute, arose
To welcome home her Lord his beauteous slave ; 320
His slave ! is that her slavery, round his neck
The snowy girdle of her arms to wreath ?
To catch a master's mandate doth she raise
The bashful fringes of her eyes, and meet
Those glances of no lordly scorn, that soothe 325
Her gentle wayward angriness of love,
Soothe, dare not chide, that coldness faint and brief
That would be wooed, but sweeter to be won ?
Nor dares not she withhold that arm uprais'd
From their high stand the furniture of fight, 330
Glaive, corslet, morion to displace ; her touch
Now clings with soft resistance, playful now
Thwarts his stern purpose.—“ Oh, remove not them ;
In hours of absence, thou too dearly lov'st,
They are my comfort, my companions they, 335
My all but thou : the dusky shades of eve
Brown o'er their glittering steal, and there array,
A bright and armed man, th' officious air
Gives motion, and with all thy graceful pride
Shakes the light plumage, thou art there, in spite 340

Of thy own tardy lingering, thou art there.
Oh, I have woke at midnight, when my soul
With thee hath been a wanderer through sad fields,
'Mid death and battle, though my lightest touch
Had prov'd thee by my side, yet my faint hand 345
Lack'd courage with that dangerous proof to front
My unsubstantial fears. Oh then, if light
Of star or moon on their blue surface gleam'd,
Or wind awoke them into sound, again
Calm on my pillow droop'd my cheek to rest, 350
Secure to find thee sweetly slumbering there.
Yet, yet unwon, oh, lighten that cold brow,
And I will sing the soft and sleepy song
That makes a woman of thy angry eyes,
Lulls the rude tumult in thy troubled breast, 355
Leaving nought there but melody and me."

Then started she to feel how hard and cold
Between her and her bosom's resting place
The corslet lay, by stealth her fond embrace
Supplanting; gently his one arm declin'd 360
Over her neck, in careless fondness hangs,
Busy the other, its rude office frames

Linking the breastplate's clasps ; now holds he back
From her approaching lips his cheek, to fix
The weighty morion ; but her garrulous grief 365
Paus'd not—" At midnight ! now ! oh brave misdeem'd,
Misdeem'd, who only th' open day would front
With his bold armour ; who but I would love,
I, weak and brainsick, one whose valour shrouds
Its prowess in the cloudy gloom of night ? 370
Oh not, oh not to war, thou goest to win
Some lovelier or some newer bride. Go, go,
Though faithless, barbarous, cruel, cold to me,
Yet make not her too wretched, make not her
Heartsick with sad expectance."—But her arms 375
Belied her desperate language, closer clasp'd
With more than maiden strength. " O, stony heart,
And I for thee forsook my infant home,
Where all my steps were music, all my smiles
Glad sunshine to my parents wintry blood, 380
That glanc'd like summer waters at my sight :
For thee did violence to my virgin fame :
By war's rude force might I have seem'd enthrall'd,
A luckless, pitied damsel ; my fond heart

Ill brook'd the coarse reproach of ravisher 385

Should couple with a name so dear as thine.

At night-fall fled I to thee ; even as now

The stars shone beauteous, and a kindly gloom

Curtain'd our meeting even as now ; no change

From soft and fond and gentle, but in thee."— 390

" Peace, trembler, peace ! to-morrow's dawn shall hail,

Borne in the shield of honour, on the necks

Of his tall peers, thy Abisa ; no voice

Silent, no quiet in the troubled air,

Restless with his hymn'd triumph, Offa's heart 395

Sick with wan envy. Then, Myfanwy, then

My glory shall make rapture of thy tears,

And thou shalt bless the grief that wrings thee now."

" Oh, glory hath a stern and savage mate,

Danger, her lawless paramour, enfolds 400

Her beauties in his churlish arms. Oh pause,

And yet farewell, 'tis exquisite to part,

For oh, thou weep'st at parting, 'twast past hope

To see a tear on that stern face for me."—

She hath her last cold kiss through the barr'd helm

Won hardly ; she is calm as though it dwelt 406

Yet on her lips, she hears his parting steps,
Yet lingers on her cheek that liquid glow,
That brilliant harmony of smile and tear
That at the presence of the one belov'd 410
Flits o'er the settled purple of the cheek.
Oh, if soft woman hath her wilder fears,
She hath her wilder hopes, for man's stern grasp
Too thin, too airy ! " Never yet found false,
Thou wilt return ;" (so wanton'd her gay dreams) 415
" So young, so lovely, fate would shame to snatch
So early the choice glories of the earth."—
Then sate she down triumphal coronets
To weave, but not in modest quiet grief,
And gentle resignation pale and mild, 420
But with a dancing heart and bright blithe eye ;
And when her eyelids droop'd, soft o'er her came
A sweet inconstant slumber, such as sleep
Love-dreaming maidens ere their bridal morn.

But through the clear calm night, the azure plain
Of heaven, with all its glittering paths of light 426
Distinct and dazzling, mov'd that fair-hair'd youth ;
So, if old fable may be won to smile

Its grace upon our darker tale, the boy,
Smooth-cheek'd Endymion, his enamour'd Moon 430
Woo'd with no lawless witchcraft from her sphere :
Nor she delay'd, her silver-sandal'd feet
Gliding and glancing o'er the dews she came,
And curtain'd in a cloud of snowy light,
Mock'd mortal harps that hymn'd her cold and chaste.
No amorous fancies o'er thy downless cheek 436
Flushing their rosy heat, no love-lipp'd tones
In sweet disturbance stealing on the air,
Young Abisa ! with more imperious charm
Thou summon'st from wild wood or cavern'd heath, 440
Nor vainly, their fierce habitant. Behold,
A shadow by thine own, its stately length
On the white dews advancing ; at thy side
The Avenger, as upsprung from nether earth.
Then fatal gladness leap'd in that young heart, 445
He flung his vizor'd helmet proudly up,
And dash'd defiance 'gainst fierce Offa's dread.
But Samor, for when his pure heart was wean'd
From all the faint and feeble of his kind,
The mercies clung within, and gentleness 450

So mingled with his nature, that it slaked
Even the blood-thirsting phrenzy of revenge;
Samor that beauteous youth survey'd, the stars
Glimmer'd a blue and hazy light, that shewed
His soft locks spreading their bright clusters wide, 455
His vermeil cheek most lovely in its wrath,
And brow that seem'd to wonder and delight
At its own dauntlessness. So tall, so fair;
Oft had he imag'd his own perish'd boy
In flower of youth, that flower which never bloom'd. 460
Tender and mild his voice, as though he spake
Even to that dead belov'd—" Oh, brave and fair,
Why thus abroad amid the silent night,
With menace and fierce gesture wild and strange?"
" Thou heardest my call, thou seest my arms, my aim 465
Idly thou question'st."—" Tis not, gentle youth,
Thy golden luxury of hair, nor cheek
Warm in the rosy wantonness of youth,
But thy brave bearing, gallant mien and proud,
That winds long-banish'd mercy round my sword, 470
To save from it one Saxon life."—" Soft praise,
And sweet from lady's lips, but not to hear

Smooth Flattery's descant come I, but to win
What, being won, is in its lofty self
Imperishable beauty, garlands youth 475
With honour passing the white hairs of age,
Glory, the life of life."—"And is there none
Whose pillow dreams of thee are haunting now?
No mother, whose last waking thought was hope,
At morn, to meet thee in thy wonted glow 480
Of loveliness and life? No gentle maid
Whom the bare thought of paleness in thy cheek,
Of death's wan chill upon thy brow, would waste
And wither like the canker'd flower of spring?
Return to her, oh fair, high-minded youth! 485
Ere yet too late, return."—But more delay
The hot youth brook'd not; down he clasp'd his helm,
And leaping to the frantic onset, cried,
"Now, Offa, for thy shame, and for thy meed,
My brother Hengist!"—As when lightning flame 490
Dashes at midnight o'er his slumbering lids,
Up starts the wild steed, all his tawny mane
Bristling and blazing, he devours the earth
In fury; even so sudden those rash words

Set flames upon the Avenger's brow, set wrath 495
On the impetuous motion of his spear.

Oh, holy Night! in thy injurious gloom
How blank the proud distinctions of man's fame!
Languor and loftiness, and shame and pride
In one dead darkness, deep forgetfulness, 500
Lie, as within a grave, till Virtue's self,
But for her haughty consciousness within,
Might weary of her mute and viewless deeds.
Secret and still, that I might violate
Thy mysteries, and redeem from envious gloom 505
That Saxon boy's dead honours, dearly won,
Most dearly, yet most nobly. Morn shall tell
The issue of that conflict, but no morn
Will dawn upon his silent, perish'd praise.

Two hours are past, alone the Avenger moves 510
Under the stars of heaven; 'tis midnight deep,
Now comes his hour of softness; love-sick boy,
Tuning soft phrenzies to his wanton lute,
Is not more wild, fantastical, or fond,
Than Britain's stately hope, high Hengist's dread. 515
For ever at this hour, of parted joy

Dim gleams revisit his forsaken soul,
Like once-lov'd music o'er a maniac's ear,
Faintly and feebly sweet, the dead put on
Their earthly lustre, Emeric comes, as fair 520
As from the bridal altar, but less coy,
In fervent full abandonment of love.
The breezes are melodious with her voice,
The dewes are printed by her slender feet,
She flows into his arms, her fond embrace 525
Is warm upon his soul. Thus aye she comes,
Or when 'tis wintry in the starless skies,
Or when the moonlight bathes the earth, to her
Heaven opes its crystal portals, beauteous light
Ushers her presence, sleep can ne'er estrange 530
That luxury from his heart ; when consciousness
Of all things earthly slumbereth and is dead,
She haunts within, her sweet intrusion clings
To the lull'd spirit, senseless but to her,
All, all the living of the man is her's. 535
Oh, in their dreamings, their communions wild
With airy, immaterial visitants,
Most differ Guilt and Virtue ; there are shapes

Hideous and hateful, snaky Gorgon smiles,
And all the fabled populace of hell, 540
Brooding disquiet o'er the thorny couch ;
But Virtue's visions are almost as fair
As Angels blest realities ; to thee
Lovely thy nightly visitant, sad Chief !
As to man, sinless yet in Eden's bowers, 545
On beds of odorous amaranth asleep,
Yet uncreated, came his virgin bride,
Delicate phantom ; then his fresh pure soul
Amorous enchantment, first entranc'd, first rose
That our best feeling, of lost Paradise 450
That sole surviving pleasure, holy love.

Beauteous thy blue uprising, mist-rob'd Morn ;
All thy bright glittering of fantastic dews
With their thin tissue silkening the green meads,
And all thy music of blithe leaves that dance 555
In the caressing breeze, and matins gay
From all the living woodland, Sleep is pleas'd
To be so sweetly banish'd her soft reign.
But dreary are thy sounds, and sad thy light
On the lewd wassail, riots orgies rude, 560
Polluting day with sights that shame dark night.

Now from the state pavilion forth are pour'd
The synod of high banqueters, their eyes
Hot with loose raptures and distemper'd joy,
Voluptuously turbulent their souls. 565
Right in their way stood fix'd a lofty spear,
Not with gay garland crown'd, or streaming silk,
But, with that beauteous head that yesternight
Confronted them with graceful pride; the cheek
Where wantonly youth's rosy banner gleam'd, 570
Pale, dewy, stiffening, lifeless, lustreless;
Part matted with red damp the golden locks
Clung round the spear, part curling on the air,
Sad semblance shew'd of life, in all the rest
Making the stillness and fix'd cold more dread. 575

No cheek was there so bright, voluptuous heart
So hot, but, like bleak snow, fear fell on it
With a cold thrill and searching; if their sight
Had yet perception, humbler chiefs might draw
From high example comfort for their dread; 580
Brow might they see with kingly crown beset,
White, sad, and shrunken as their own. Alone,
Fierce smil'd the pride of Offa; he held up

To those wan lips the sparkling shell of mead :
“ Drink, thou hast kept thy oath, drink, soft-lipp’d boy ! ”

O’er all the camp spread loud and wide and far 586
The name of Abisa ; Myfanwy heard
Where lay she dreaming half, and fabling half
Of garlands and of gay triumphal pomp.
How nimble are the feet that bear light hearts. 590
She is gone forth, and all for joy forgot
The veil e’er wont to dim her dazzling cheek,
Forgot the braiding of her hair, the maid
So soft, so timorous, at the wanton breeze
She oft hath trembled, ’neath day’s eye retired 595
Even from the fondness of her own loved youth.
Through files of warriors, who uncasque their brows
To fill their curious gaze, she hurries on,
She knows not what she sees, and only knows,
She sees not what she seeks, that cheek, that eye 600
Which fed on her with such excess of love
As if ’twere worse than blindness to lose sight
Of its sole idol ; only she is blithe,
She only smiling ’mid those many sad.
She meets even all she longs for ; up from earth 605

(For now from that sad eminence of scorn
Had friendly hand remov'd it, now had cleans'd
Its damp defilement) that dear face on her
Settled its fixed and inexpressive gaze.
Her mien was strangely rational, her look 610
Like one that calmly ponder'd what it saw,
Her voice articulate and passionless.
"Who hath done this?"—"The Avenger, the unknown,"
Spake many voices.—"Oh, my hands are weak;
Ye see them soft and delicate and white, 615
But thou, and thou, and thou, art bold and strong,
And bear'st bright armour, ye will sure requite
The slaughter on the slaughterer's head."—Ensued
Brief moments of a stagnant grief, life paus'd,
As 'twould prolong unconsciousness, delay 620
Yet, yet that state that wakes with waking sense.
Then kindled up her eye, but not with joy,
Then flush'd her cheek a light and sanguine red,
That its fair marble flitted o'er, but left
Nor tinge nor warmth; she snatch'd up to her heart
That lifeless thing and fled; as some fond bird 626
With spread wings hovering o'er her nest, looks round

At some black shape of fear, then turns to see
If yet her callow brood are slumbering safe,
So wandering her dim eye on all around, 630
Anon with full intensity of love,
Settled on her cold care. She reach'd the tent,
There miserly her treasure she o'erbroods ;
She lays it on her lap, and sings to it,
Now gazes as she thought even yet those eyes 635
Might open, those wan lips their wonted sounds
Murmur, now almost sees a forming smile :
Now gaily carols on her broken songs,
Ever his favourite, most familiar tones,
And now breaks off, as fearful to disturb 640
His quiet slumbers, only speaks in smiles,
Language by him e'er understood, and once,
Once her rash lips approach'd : so pass'd the hours
From earliest morning till the setting sun.
Then that wild spirit and playfulness of grief 645
Sadden'd to drear sobriety, gave place
Sweet-dreaming twilight to the bright clear day.
Then first she thought of beasts and fowls obscene
Battening on his fair limbs, no hand to heap

The scanty pity of a little earth 650
Upon the brave, the princely, and the fair :
Envious of partner in her sacred toil,
Bearing her cold wan burthen in her arms,
Alone upon the pious quest she speeds.
She fears not, ah too wretched now to fear ! 655
Darkness is on her steps, but what to her
Though nature's rich varieties are blank ?
Her guide the unblinded sympathies within ;
The love that link'd her to his living soul
Will light her to him lifeless ; yon wan stars, 660
That struggle with the haze, are bright enough
To beam upon the dead. But now more fast
Their golden cressets multiply, more clear,
And lo fierce Offa in her path : his eye
Fix'd on her with a rude imperious lust, 665
As the pollution of his bad desires
Did honour to their victim. But the maid,
Unbelieving, unsuspecting aught impure,
With sweet beseeching, almost with caress,
Would win her onward passage ; when her soul 670
Was startled into fear, she would not think,

Such savage nature dwelt in human hearts.
She wept, she sued, she drew the veil away,
Upheld that lovely lifeless thing—in vain :
The snowy dove is in the rude kite's grasp, 675
Pale, fluttering, fainting ; upon Heaven she call'd,
Cruelly calm look'd on her the cool skies ;
She call'd on Abisa, but only felt
More deeply that cold glassiness of face,
That dull, indifferent witness of her shame ; 680
But in the stress and hurry of despair
Strange energies were hers, with frantic voice
She call'd on the Avenger—Lo, he comes,
Terrible in the silence of his arms,
And earth is dank with Offa's lustful blood. 685
But her first motion was a frantic kiss
On Abisa's cold lips, as though for him
Proud of the untainted treasure of her love ;
Then turn'd to her preserver, but with looks
Of loathing more than thankfulness ; he stood 690
In gentle majesty serene, yet proud
Of that light victory, of prevented crime
Severely joyful ; bitter strife of heart

Spake in her language—" Had it been but death,
I yet had curs'd thee ! oh, look here, look here ! 695

(And she withdrew the clust'ring curls that veil'd
The rigid deathfulness of that fair brow)

Oh, one sole feeling to this dead heart seem'd

A duty and delight, the hate of thee.

Cruel, even that thou enviest me, even that."— 700

" That, British maiden ! is a Saxon's face,

Yet mourns thy amorous heart in guilty tears ?"

" Is there not beauty in a Saxon's cheek,

Is there not music on a Saxon's tongue,

Is there not tenderness in Saxon hearts ? 705

Oh, he is kind and true, his love to me

Almost as deep and fond, as mine to him,

Wild that I am, he was, that fatal was

Makes agony my sacred thought of him."—

" Maiden, by Wye's transparent stream abode 710

An aged pair, and their declining day

One beauteous child enlighten'd, and dispens'd

Soft moonlight o'er their darkening eve ; they thought

The only pang of death from her to part.

But heavy was their sinking to the grave, 715

For that fair beam in unchaste darkness quench'd
Its virgin lustre, and its light withdrew,
Of their old limbs the life : alone they dwelt,
In discontent and cold distaste of all,
As her ingratitude had made them sick 720
Of the world's hollowness, and if she fail'd
All earthly things must needs be false and frail.
They ne'er reproach'd her, for so near the grave
They could not hate ; but for her sake they loath'd
Each old familiar face, that once they lov'd. 725
Where she was wont to wander, wander'd they ;
The garden flowers she tended, they bound up
With woeful care ; their chill and shaking hands
Made tremulous music with her lute, I shrunk
In hoary age to see such childish joys. 730
They felt one after pleasure, the same hour
They glided from their woes, their parting breath,
Blended in languid blessings on her head,
For her went suppliant to the throne of God,
Their lost Myfanwy."—Trembling stood she there, 735
Like one that strives to weep, but the hard tears
Are frozen in their source. " Oh thou and I,

Sweet Abisa (to that cold head she spake),
We will go weep upon their graves, and win
Their spirits to forgiveness; when they hear 740
How fervent and how fatal were our loves,
Heaven will lend airs to waft their mercy down."
"Fond Maid, beware! repentance must be chaste
And spotless as the unsunn'd snow; wilt thou
Yet wanton with the memory of thy sin, 745
Bad thoughts at revel in thy heart, with vows
Lightly made up of guilty breath impure,
Pollute and sicken the clear air that dwells
About the holy dwellings of the dead;
Waver from God to Pagan paramour 750
With wandering loose affections." "Hard and cold,
Be thou content to have robb'd this widow'd heart
Of that most lovely breathing thing earth bore,
But spare, oh spare, the sinless, senseless dead!
Cruel, by yon bright stars I oft have sworn 755
Ne'er to forego him; shall I crown my sins
With perjury? I will weep, and fast, and pray,
And wear the rough stones with my tender knees,
So thou wilt leave me my sad thoughts of him.

Oh, God hath grace for all ; my earliest prayer 760
Shall be for mercy on his perish'd soul,
The next for those who dying pray'd for me,
And for my sad and sinful self the last."

Most exquisite sorcery of womankind !
Even to the fall'n some cherish'd loveliness 765

Yet clings, with innocent hypocrisy
Tricking their failures in such tender hues,
We blame with tears, enamour'd while we blame.

Even thus her fervent constancy of love
Brighten'd that guilty maiden.—" God will weigh 770

With righteous hand thy sorrows and thy sins,
Damsel, I nor absolve thee, nor condemn.

Come thou with me, and we will reunite
That beauteous boy's remains ; oh thou, even thou,

Knewst thou the studious cruelties, cold crimes 775

By these barbarians wrought on this sad land,

Wouldst pardon this dishonour to the corpse

Of that brave youth."—She leap'd up to his neck,

" And who art thou, that doest such savage deeds,

Yet forcest us to love thee?"—On they past, 780

They reach'd the place of death, he dug away

The earth that fenc'd from wandering kite and wolf
Young Abisa's fair limbs ; he sooth'd her woes
By soft participation, her consol'd
By suffering, and the Christian's voice rose up
In prayers for mercy on a Saxon's soul.

785

BOOK VII.

How measureless to erring human sight
Is glory ! Glorious thy majestic state,
Hengist ! with captive cities for thy thrones,
And captive nations thy pale satellites,
Britain, with all her beauty, power, and wealth, 5
Thy palace of dominion. Glorious thou,
Caswallon, in Caer Ebranc's stately courts,
By the slow waters of the wandering Ouse,
Bright-sceptred Renegade ! Even in your crimes
Glitters a dazzling and meteorous pomp, 10
Though your wild voyage hath lain through waves of
 blood.
Ye ride triumphant in your royal port ;
But he, sad Pilgrim, outcast and forlorn

How doth the midnight of his honour shame
Your broad meridian, his wild freedom pass 15
Your plenitude of sway, his nakedness
Transcend your sweeping purples, rayed with gold !
Nor wanteth to his state its gorgeous pride,
And high peculiar majesty ; the pomp
Of the conspiring elements sheds on him 20
Tumultuous grandeurs ; o'er his midnight couch,
Amid the scath'd oaks of the mountain moor,
On its broad wings of gloom the tempest stoops.
Around his head in crystal coronets
The lightning falls, as though thy fiery hand, 25
Almighty ! through the rolling clouds put forth,
Did honour to the Freeman. Mighty winds
And the careering thunders spread around
Turbulent music ; darkness rivals day,
And day with darkness vies in stateliest pride 30
The Avenger's lofty miseries to array.
When from the East forth leaps the warrior Sun
In panoply of golden light, dark cowers
His own proud eagle, marvelling what strong form,
Uprising to usurp his haughty right, 35

Drinks in the intense magnificence with brow
Undazzled and unshrinking ; nor to him
Fails homage from the living shapes of earth :
On him the savage, fierce and monstrous, fawn
Tame adoration ; from his rugged sleep 40
The wild boar, sleek his bristling wrath, aloof
Shrinks, the grim wolf no more his rest disturbs,
Than the calm motion of the moon she bays.

Now, by her native sylvan Wye, that Maid,
Left to cold penitence and prayer, again 45
Sets forth the high Avenger : now his path
Through Towey's vale winds velvet soft and green.
The year is in its waning autumn glow,
But the warm Sun, with all his summer love,
Hangs o'er this gentle valley, loath to part 50
From the blue stream that to his amorous beams
Now her cool bosom spreads, now coyer slides
Under her alder shade, whose umbrage green,
Glancing and breaking the fantastic rays,
The deep dark mirror frets with mazy light. 55
A day that seems in its rich noon to blend
All seasons choice deliciousness, high hung

On Dinevaur and Carreg Cannon rude,
And on bold Drusslyn gleam'd the woods their hues,
Changeful and brilliant, as their leaves had drank 60
The sun's empyreal fountains; not more bright
The groves of those Atlantic Isles, where rove
(Dream'd elder Poesy such fancies sweet)
The spirits of the brave, stern Peleus' son,
And Diomedé, through bowers that the blue air 65
Arch'd with immortal spring of fragrant gold.
The merry birds, as though they had o'erdream'd
The churlish winter, spring-tide virelays
Carolling, pruned their all-forgotten plumes.
Upon the sunny shallow lay the trout 70
Kindling the soft gems of its skin; the snake
As fresh and wanton in its green attire
Wound its gay rings along the flowery sward.
That overpowering beauty in mild bonds
Of sweet amazement and infatuate bliss, 75
Took prisoner Samor's spirit. On a rock,
'Neath a white canopy of glistening birch,
He lay surrender'd. The thin whispering leaves,
The welling waters flow, the lingering, long,

Love-dwelling descant of the joyous birds 80
Came mingling with the languor of his sense,
Most soothing each in turn, most slumb'ring soft.

'Tis no harsh breaking in that train of sound
Delicious, but a low and measur'd dash
That blends and deepens all the mingling tones ; 85
'Tis nought to cloud or dim that slow intrudes
On the universal brilliance, crowning all
Moves the gay apparition, and fires up
The restless glittering to intenser blaze.

Slow up the tide the gaudy bark comes on, 90
Her oars scarce startling the unruffled air ;
The waters to her swan-like prow give place,
Along the oar-blades leap up to the sun
In lucid flakes, and dance, as 'twere their sport
To waft that beauteous freight. And exquisite 95
As that voluptuous Memphian on the stream
Of Cydnus, leading with bliss-breathing smiles
Her throngs of rash beholders, glided down
To welcome to his soft imprisonment
The Lord of half the world, so wond'rous fair 100
Under an awning cool of fluttering silk

The Lady of that graceful galley sate.
But not in her instinct the melting form
With passion, the smooth limbs in dazzling glow
Translucent through the thin lascivious veil, 105
Skilful with careless blandishments to fire
The loose imaginations, she herein
Least like that Oriental harlot Queen.
Of all her shape, of all her soul was pride
The sustenance, the luxury, the life. 110
The innate scorn of her full eye repaid
With lofty thanklessness the homage fawn'd
By her fair handmaids, and her oarmen gay,
Who seem'd to wanton in their servile toil.
Around she gaz'd, as in her haughtiness 115
She thought that God had form'd this living pomp
Of woodland, stream, and rock, her height of soul
To pamper, that to welcome her the earth
Attired its breathing brightness, and the sun
Only on her look'd from his azure sphere. 120
Knows Samor that bright Lady? Who knows not
Amid her twinkling retinue of stars
The queenly summer moon? Ye too he knows,
The minion rowers of her royal state,

Entitled once by courteous falsehoods bland 125

Nobles of Britain, from the general wreck

Most despicably saved by Saxon scorn,

Meet vassalage for Vortigern, now shrunk

And dwindled from proud Britain's sov'reign lord

To petty Prince of Dyfed.* Ye yet cling 130

Even to the hollow semblance of a crown.

Ye gauzy summer motes, that float and bask

In the warm noontide of a court, light things

Of noise and glittering, that to royal ears

Tinkle your poisonous flatteries, then most proud 135

When most obtrusive your gay nothingness.

Under a rock where Samor lay unseen

Beneath the sparkling birchen shade, the bark

Glided so near, the silver-twinkling leaves

Play'd like a wavering veil o'er the bright face 140

And marble neck of that reclining Queen.

Now, Samor, now 'tis at thy thirsty lips

The cup of vengeance, now quaff deep, quaff deep!

Now, by the bones that bleach on Ambri plain,

By thy lost Emeric's silent chamber bowers, 145

By that soft cheek o'er which the primrose blooms,

* Or, Dimetia, i. e. South Wales.

Now launch the unerring javelin ! lo she tempts,
The Saxon's daughter, and the false King's bride,
The tame and baffled lingering of revenge.

And up the Avenger stood, a ray of light 150
Quiver'd the brandish'd javelin, creeping awe
Froze up the rowers hearts, down fell the oars,
And to the shore round swung the ungovern'd bark.

But 'mid those feminine and timorous men
Intrepid that soft lady her fair front 155
Advanc'd, and, " Who art thou, whose impious arm
'Gainst royalty's anointed head dare sway
Irreverent menace ?"—" One whom grinding wrong,
And injuries savage, black, and manifold
Have almost madden'd to the deep base shame 160
Of soiling his bright arms with woman's blood."

(He cast the javelin from him, and went on)
" But tell thy sire, Rowena, tell thy lord,
Britons have yet to learn their codes of war,
That yet fastidious vengeance will not slake 165
But on a worthy victim its deep thirst."

Then was the mingling of their looks elate,
As when two falcons, far from this low earth,

Meet in the sun's broad blaze, they glad and proud
Each of their kindred, flap their radiant wings. 170

“ I know thee now, majestic Rebel ! thee
The untraceable, untameable ! I know
The chosen Man of Fate ! of all our race
The designated danger ; merciful
Saxon ne'er coupled with thy name till now. 175
Yet think not thou from rivalry aloof
In proud and lonely excellence to stand,
For with requital royal and profuse
I will outsoar thee ; this white woman's hand
Shall cast thee Hengist's pardon for thy deeds 180
Of guilty fame ; this smooth and purple cheek
Smile thee fair honours in Caer Merdhyn's court.”

“ Pardon, and honour, Lady ! one alone
Jealous prerogative of pardon holds
O'er Samor's soul, the universal God ! 185
Caer Merdhyn's honours ! to fall'n Vortigern
To be install'd prime flatterer, meekly laud
The bounteous-hearted monarch, who cast off
His throne, his people, and his fame, and thought
For bride so fair the dowry all too poor.” 190

No wrath, but brighter joy the Lady's cheek
Emblazon'd: "Why should slight and tinsel ties
Of blood and birthplace hold asunder hearts
Kindred in grandeur? thou art brave and free,
And brave and free is Hengist; why disdains 195
Valour to mate with valour, might with might?"
"Valour beneath the sun goes proudly forth;
And in the cloudy battle's van affronts
His hauberk'd foe, but folds not secret steel
Under the mild and festal robe of peace, 200
Nor creeps with midnight stealth on the weak sleep
Of women and soft infants."—Then appear'd
Tears in her haughty eyes, tears beautiful,
For drops of shame they were for those black crimes
That fleck'd and dimm'd her father's blaze of fame. 205
Still paus'd not the Avenger.—"Did my God,
Did Britain claim the offering, I dare hope
Yet I could rend from this worn heart away
Its pleasant lust of vengeance; private wrongs
Are but thin drops in my full tide of hate; 210
But all my country's injuries, all my God's
Concentrate in the mighty passion flood,

My life, my soul, my being ; we must be,
I and thy father, through all space of time,
Even to the end, Destroyer or Destroy'd."— 215

“ Harsh and implacable ! yet be not thou
Discourteous : wilt thou to Caer Merdhyn come,
An honour'd guest, in freedom to depart
When, where thou wilt, thy pledge my royal faith ?”

“ A Saxon's faith !” burst bitter from his lips, 220
He check'd the upbraiding tone. “ If fraud and sin
In such a lovely temple hold their shrine,
It were not strange did fiends of darkness dwell
Within yon beauteous sun !” But she with smile
Mild as May morning on a violet bank, 225

“ Why stayst thou ? can the Unconquerable fear—— ?”

“ Fear, Lady ! fear and I are strangers now.”—

“ What wondrous spell,” pursued her playful mirth,

“ So steels thee ?” —“ One most simple and most strong,
A calm proud conscience, and a faith in God.” 230

Then sate he by the Lady's side ; set forth
Upon its dancing voyage down the tide
The bark obeisant to its dashing oars.
But those gay rowers veering with the wind

Of soft court favour, 'gan with subtle joy 235
And cold factitious transport hail again
Their gentle peer, their old and honour'd friend.
But with a glance the imperial Lady froze
To silence their smooth-lying lips, nor brook'd
Idle intrusion on her rapturous feast. 240
Deep drank she in the majesty and pomp,
Wherewith instinct the Avenger mov'd and spake,
And what high beauty from heroic soul
Emanates on the outward shape, nor pall'd
On her insatiate appetite the joy ; 245
Till that commercing deep of stately thoughts,
Proud admiration, and intense delight
In what is heart-subliming, towering, grand,
Regenerate from the trance that bath'd her sense,
Sprang up a fiery passion, o'er her flow'd 250
Secret the intoxicating extacy,
Love, dangerous, deep, intolerable love.
What beauteous seeming and magnificent,
Weareth that brilliant sin ! now not o'er her
Came it in melting languor, soft and bland, 255
But like her own high nature, eminent,

Disdainful, and elate, allied to all
That beautified, that glorified, and seem'd
Mysterious union of upsoaring spirits,
Wedding of lofty thoughts with lofty thoughts, 260
And the fine joy of being to this earth
A thing of wonder : and as floats the air
Clear, white, and stainless in the highest heavens,
Seem'd from its exaltation fresh and pure,
• Above all taint her amorous madness rose. 265
Had it seem'd love, her very pride had quell'd
The unplum'd phantasy, her inbred scorn
Warr'd on the young infirmity, but now
Upon her soul's bold crest it planted high
Its banner of dominion, and she hail'd 270
Its coming as a guest of pomp and power.

But, though o'er all her features mantling spread
A vivid restlessness, a lustrous glow,
A deepening purple, though her eye indulg'd
Richer delirium, though her languid breath 275
Came with a throb and struggle from her heart,
Yet in that noble kindness that disdains
With greedy and suspicious gaze to search

The sin that may be, rather chastening all
With his own native purity, serene 280
The Warrior sate. The placid gliding bark,
With motion like to stillness, flowing on,
Where with green diadem of woods above,
Beneath the white breadth of the expanding stream,
Caer Merdhyn in the liquid noontide rose. 285

Fair rose Caer Merdhyn, rose her towery height
The air enriching, nor mis-seem'd a King
Such stately dwelling ; populous her streets,
And throng'd with human faces, but o'er all
A lassitude and heavy sadness hung, 290
Blankness of looks and weariness of hearts,
And listlessness of motion faltering on.
With all the pomps, the luxuries of life,
It seem'd a city of the dead. The shapes,
The steps of men were there, but soul and spirit, 295
And stirring energy, and vivid mind,
Passion and earnestness in torpor slept,
The cold blood stagnate in the drowsy veins :
Alike all feelings lazy languor seal'd.
To still them, not delight, the mothers held 300

Their infants, as the radiant Queen past on ;
But even in them the laughing spring of joy
Was dead, and dry, and frozen.—“ Oh, high God !
(So spake the Wanderer in his secret soul)
Hath tyranny such bleak and withering power 305
Man's heavenly essence to embrate, and thou,
Once princely Vortigern, the tyrant thou ! ”—

Worse sight ! worse shame ! they reach the broad hill's
brow,
Where in its royalty the palace look'd
Awe on its vassal city ; there, even there, 310
On that high threshold, armed Saxon files
From the weak people fenc'd the weaker King.
But through that legion hateful and accurst
Onward the Avenger that bright Lady's hand
Led, as the Sybil sage the Love-queen's son 315
Calm through the doleful regions of the dead.

Within the hall with royal banners hung,
And shields of royal blazon, royal arms,
Least royal he, sate Vortigern ; deep thought
And miserable on his faded brow 320
Traced its bleak lines, before him glittering lay

The crown of Britain, which his eye perused
With a sick sadness, as each gem were full
Of woeful ruminations, blank remorse ;
And as bad Angels loathe, yet upward watch, 325
Heaven's Sun, bright type of their once radiant state,
Even so in bitterness that fallen King,
Painfully banquetting on self-reproach,
A drear remembrance of lost grandeurs drew
From that fair ring, and curs'd its blaze that flash'd 330
Past splendours o'er the darkness of his soul,
And memory from what height to what depth sunk,
He welters in the abyss of shame profound.
Beside him o'er his harp Aneurin bow'd,
The white-hair'd Bard, sole faithful he, sole friend ; 335
For minds of poets from their own high sphere
Look down on earth's distinctions, high and low,
Sunken or soaring, as the equal sun
Sheds light along the vale and mountain's brow.
He in the hall of feasting who fast seal'd 340
The treasures of his harmony, now pours
Into the wounded heart his syrups sweet,
And laps it in the silken folds of sound.

But even along his strings the infectious grief
Hath crept, and wither'd up their wantonness. 345
And wayward wanderings of despair belate
His fickle tones : anon bursts full and free.
A start, a swell of pride, then sinks away
Involuntary to such doleful fall,
Misery so musical, its languid breath 350
Feeds, while it softens the deep-rooted woe.
Such melodies at tragic midnight heard
'Mid a deserted city, gliding o'er
The deep green moss of tower and fane o'erthrown,
Had seem'd immortal sorrows in the air, 355
O'er man's inconstant grandeurs. Sad such wreck,
More sad, more worthy Angels woe the waste
And desolation of a noble mind,
High fertile faculties run wild and rank,
Bright fiery qualities in darkness slaked. 360
That liquid intercourse of grief broke off,
Thus spake the King—" Who thus unbidden bursts
On kingly solitude? why ask I thee?
No brow between the Scot and Southern sea
Beareth such gallant insolence abroad, 365

But Samor, the wild Wanderer, the denounc'd,
The desperate ! Art thou here to stun mine ears
With " Vortigern is abject, lost, disgrac'd ?"
'Tis well that with thee comes my bright excuse,
My poverty's rich treasure, my night's star, 370
Beauteous Rowena."—Joy seem'd his, but yet
Was effort and was struggle in that joy,
The clinging of a desperate soul to what
It would delight in, but did not delight,
The striving of a barren heart to force 375
The perish'd bloom of pleasure,—“ King, I come
To put a spell upon thee, conjure up
Thy valour from its tomb within thy breast,
To rend the adamant that trammels fast
Thy strength of soul. By yon bright glaive that smote
By Esk's wild bank, beneath his father's shield, 381
The royal Caledonian's son ; yon flag,
That, when by fated Arles rash Britain lost
Her wild bright hazard for imperial state,
Clouding the car of adverse victory shook 385
Untarnish'd in the sun its blazon broad,
Nor stoop'd, though all was fallen ; by yon rich crown,

Whereon when flow'd the holy oil, this isle
From all her seas her gratulant acclaim
Sent up, and overcast heaven's vault with joy ; 390
By Vortigern, the great, the brave, the wise !—
“ Brave ! wise ! aye, that it is. The veriest wretch
That from base birth-place to his baser grave,
Creeps with his fellow reptiles, that ne'er knew
What luxury 'tis, what loftiness to soar, 395
And with one soul to wield a host of souls
In free subjection, oh that fireless dust,
Clay uninform'd, that only lives to die,
That is to me a God : to me whose curse,
And brand, and mock it is to have been great— 400
And be—oh ! Samor, Samor, I was King,
King of this spacious, rich, and glorious isle,
And thou, and such as thou, my regal state
Didst vassal ; now, but now an eye may trace
The circuit of my realm, a shepherd's boy 405
Count my thin people, like his mountain flock.”
“ Oh, Monarch, ill must be atoned by good,
And to repentant deeds of mightiest fame
Heaven can upraise the farthest sunken. Power

Fails not the aspirant will. I knew thee once 410
A being of those arduous energies,
Strong aspirations, graspings undefin'd,
Tumultuous thirsts and passions, that of man
Make Fiend or Angel."—" True, too true, but thou
Hast seiz'd the Seraph's air-plum'd wings, and I 415
The Demon's vans of darkness. Had all fallen,
All perish'd, one wide ignominy swept
Princes and Lords and People, I had found
A forlorn comfort in the general wreck ;
But in its curst sublimity thy fame 420
Obtrudes its radiant presence, and makes groan
This ruin of a Monarch."—" Rare it is,
Oh King, in Fame's rich galaxy to shine
With steadfast blaze unwithering, but to dawn
From darkness, scatter off the black eclipse 425
That veils the wither'd lustre, this most rare,
Maketh man's soul an everlasting fire
Worthy the God that hung the Heavens with light ;
'Tis hard for downcast spirit to o'erleap
Ruin's sad barriers, but Heavens angels drop 430
Soft dews beneath his burning feet, his flight

Imp with strong plumes; his coming doth adorn
The earth he moves on; till Remorse abash'd
Before the orient glories fades and flies."—

“Peace! peace! thou canst not see what cold within
Lies like a palsy on the flagging powers, 436
Makes me a thin and shrinking reed, the sport
Of every lazy wind, the shape, the life,
The woe, without the faculties of man,
Shame, shame.—Oh, turn thy lofty brow away, 440
Heavy it hangs o’er me like loosen’d crag
Over the mountain traveller—I endure,
Of all this nation, the curse-wrinkled lips,
Out-pointed fingers, ribald jests, coarse scorns.
Men that have lick’d the dust beneath my feet, 445
Worn their tame faces by the mould of mine,
Them, to confront even them.”—Unkingly tears
Chok’d the full utterance, met his eye the glance
Of that proud Queen, who, all unmark’d, drank in
That passionate discourse, from her contempt, 450
Though far below his own, he shrunk, and wrought
To a brief pride his wan dejected mien.
“Here is my throne, my kingdom is this breast,

My diadem the wealth of light that shines
From yon fair brow upon me."—Stronger pain 455
Burst in upon the infant pride; forth fled
The Monarch, happy could he fly himself.
Him follow'd that old Bard. " 'Tis vain, all vain,
(Thus spake the high Avenger.) "Beauteous Queen,
I claim thy faith, and part."—"So swift, so soon, 460
Our festal cheer untasted, welcome cup
Uncrown'd?"—"Fair Queen, in the pellucid stream
My beverage dances; the coarse mountain boor
Shares his hard fare with me; the hand that feasts
The winged wanderers of the air, feasts me."— 465

With lips in act of speech apart, the Queen,
As to her will her tongue disdainful scorn'd
Allegiance, chain'd in silence stood again.
Twice she essay'd to speak, twice o'er her shame
Swept his petrific hand, and rosy fire 470
O'er face and neck and forehead flush'd, till shrunk
From that strong heat the eye, and down on earth
Settled its close-fring'd orb; with pressure soft
Her blushing fingers his bronzed hand embrac'd.

"Here in this palace is my rule, this land 475

Is mine by my prevailing power, would'st thou
Of this high seat, this realm be Lord?—Why starts
Unwonted colour to thy cheek? why shrinks
Into its sphere thine eye? Said I this soul,
And what soft beauty glitters in this shape, 480
Had it appall'd thee?"—Eagerly she grasp'd
The hand she held, as though from thence to wring
A swift reply, yet gaz'd upon the earth,
As wistful 'neath its darkness she might shrink
From her own shame. Blank wonder Samor's brow 485
To living stone congeal'd—"This then the close
To all thy lavish love of Vortigern!"

"My love! he was a King, upon his brow
The beauty of a royal crown, his height
Dominion, like a precious mantle, dipt 490
In heaven's pure light array'd, and o'er him flung
Transcendant grandeur; above all he stood,
And I by such fond splendours wooed and won,
Took seat upon his eminence; a plant
To spread, and mantle an imperial throne, 495
Not like tame ivy round a ruin creep,
Or wreath the tomb of royalty. His pride

I wedded, not his shame ; bats may not build
With the light-loving lark. He, he himself
By self-abasement has divorc'd me, set 500
Distance between us wide and far as heaven
From the black pit of infamy."—" High Queen,
What seest thou in this bleak and batter'd brow,
These rough scath'd limbs, this wan and sunken face,
With misery's rugged furrows deeply plough'd, 505
To dazzle or delight? Lone outcast I,
Friendless, but daily, nightly by fierce foes
Beset and hunted like a loathsome brute ;
Thy nation's mothers vent all hate on me,
Link with a scathing curse no name but mine. 510
Oh, what would'st thou and softness with a life
Like mine so dreary, desperate, dark, and fierce ?
" Oh, 'tis because all hate thee, that I love,
Because all dread thee, I would mate with thee,
Thy miseries, thy dangers deeper drown 515
My soul with passion, that thou walk'st alone,
Smote at by every arm, yet struck by none,
That mastery of thy single soul holds down
The Saxons mounting empire, clips its wings

Rapacious and wide-shadowing, that thy fame 520
Like a rich rainbow cloud, sails on through air,
To mortal grasp impalpable, to sight
In lonely brilliance manifest ; my soul
To that thy airy chariot would aspire,
And dazzle by thy side, and daunt the world."— 525

“ Loose and unrighteous to thy lawful Lord,
Yet would'st thou poison with adulterous shame
Its spotless lustre, its pure white defile,
And clog with guilt its vaunted wheels.”—Guilt! Guilt!
Ah, now I know why mine eye shrunk from thine, 530
Why sought the base earth, why brook'd not my tongue
The motions of my will—but we—shrink we?
The lofty are their own high law ; dull codes,
Cold customs, trammel but the base ; our sins
Shall be the wanderings of the meteor fire, 535
More wonder'd than the regular calm stars :
Our acting shall ennoble, what tame tongues
Falter at even in word, opinions hues
Shall at our haughty bidding shift and change,
And what we do, shall therefore be call'd great. 540
Yes, yes, I feel thy shrinking hand, I see

White-lipp'd abhorrence quivering in thy mien
As at some loathsome viper. Woe, oh woe
To him that tramples on the viper's wrath."—
Then shook she back her golden hair, away 545
Cast his cold hand.—“ Ho, Saxons at the gate,
Ho, Saxons, to your injured Queen !” The hall
Sudden was walled with fiery arms and spears
Bickering fierce menace ; numerous, swift, and strong,
As when old Cadmus by clear Dirce spread 550
That dangerous seed uncouth, long, wide, and bright
Under the fatal ploughshare leap'd to life,
To havock the wild harvest, and shook up
Its bearded grim fertility of death.

But then his sword the Avenger grasp'd, and cried,
“ Twice have I trusted Saxon faith, and twice 556
Beneath my feet the smooth fair ice hath burst
Its glassy treachery : once this arm redeem'd
The infatuate blindness. Saxons, I am he,
Who with his single strength on Ambri plain 560
Scared your hot massacre, your proudest necks
Strew'd for his pavement of retreat, ye see
Mine arm unwither'd ; my unbroken sword.”

But they sprung onward ; that bright Lady's brow
 Awful delight absorb'd the while, she moved 565
 Before their wrath, her arm's high sway wav'd back
 Their fury from her presence. Swift they came,
 Swift they departed ; silence down the walls
 Crept o'er the banners broad, and pendant shields.

She look'd on Samor, all his pride was hers, 570
 She look'd on Samor, all that pride was quench'd
 In exquisite mild transport ; at his feet
 The Queen, the haughty, the disdainful fell.
 Her fine fair hair lay floating on the earth ;
 Her round arms clung beseeching to his knees. 575

“ A curse upon me, that my wilful heart
 'Gainst head so brave, so noble, dream'd of wrath,
 Of danger and rude menace. What I did,
 I know not, what I said, it pleased not thee,
 Enough, 'twas base, 'twas criminal, 'twas false. 280
 Oh Chief ! when we would compass wild desires,
 Words alien to the heart start up, yet seem
 Most strong persuasion ; of all serpents, scorn
 Stings to worse frenzy, worst a woman's soul.
 Forget, all, all forget, but one soft word, 585

And that I charge thee, by thy rescued life,
Forget not."—"Lady, were I rich in love,
As yon full Sun in light, I could not spare
A beam upon a Saxon. Now, but now
The fountains of my heart are dry, the stock 590
Where fresh and rich my green affections bloom'd,
Is wither'd to the root; hard, doleful, dead,
My breast's impassive iron scatters off
All melting blandishments, all soft delights,
As the wav'd banner the thin morning dews. 595
With one harsh discord to consummate all;
Thou art thy Father's daughter."—She arose
In miserable calmness resolute.
She took his hand, she led him forth, beneath
The murky scowling of those Saxons stern, 600
Whose angry wonder scarce herself controll'd:
Gave one fond lingering pressure, and but one,
Then watch'd him through the city, up the vale,
If gazing with such emptiness of eye
Were watching, which his distance seem'd to freeze 605
Gradual to hollower wanness; down her arms
Hung, only that she stood and faintly breath'd,
Pulse, motion, sense, life, all seem'd fled with him.

Sudden above her, the mild air 'gan waft
 Wild fiery sounds, like those of battle morn, 610
 Which champing war-steed's neigh, and lance's rush,
 Impatient answers. On the palace top
 Aneurin in his bardic glory stood;
 The sunlight on his old prophetic brow
 Flash'd strong, yet dazzled not, his long white locks 615
 Stream'd back upon his azure robe, like rack
 O'er heaven's unclouded blue, his pale thin hand
 With strength of mounting phrenzy launch'd abroad
 The war-song of Cassivelan: glad sounds
 To that tranç'd queen, for Samor's hastier port 620
 Deliberate grandeur slacken'd, he look'd back,
 Proud gratitude for that wild flattery.—“ All,
 All in one wide conspiracy, (so spake
 Rowena's bitter joy) thee, only thee
 To glorify. Oh, were man mute, this earth 625
 Would leap to utterance of thy fame, the winds
 Find voices eloquent, the streams, the stones,
 To lofty music burst of thy renown.”

Slowly retired the Queen; she call'd around
 Her slaves, her handmaids; arrogant their looks 630
 Seem'd to confront her, eyes aye wont to shrink

Before her gaze, now seem'd to pry and pierce
Her deepest soul's recesses ; and she blush'd
Even in her plenitude of scorn. They stood
Trembling before her wayward mood, yet seem'd 635
Mockeries their tremors ; solitude she sought,
Yet solitude found none, things senseless took
Stern cognizance of all her acts, her thoughts :
Eyes hung the empty walls, weak laughing sounds
Of triumph o'er her shame, pervaded wide 640
The tranquil air, all with herself at league
Shook scorns upon herself. Dim evening falls,
O'er earth and sky, slow flits the shadowy night.
“ Slaves there ! ” she cried, “ my steed ! alone I ride.”
She wont to find her every look a law, 645
Now almost wonders all so swift obey.

The moon's white sickle tenderly array'd
With dubious lustre the gray heavens ; scarce tinged
The dew-webs, whiten'd not the yellow crown
Of the unwaving forest ; ignorant, 650
Or with feign'd ignorance 'guiling even herself,
Long upon Samor's track the Lady rides.

'Tis not a stag that couches on the heath ;

Hope on her dim cheek brightens, from her steed
Soft she dismounts, she ruffles not the fern, 655
The moss springs printless up beneath her feet,
So light her gliding to that slumbering man.
She knows him, she starts back.—“ Oh, came I here,
Lost and abas'd, him, only him to seek,
That answers mine immodest heart with flight, 660
With scorn, perchance with hate ! yet wonderful he,
Wonderous in rest as action ! Sleep'st thou calm,
While numberless as these brown heath-spikes rise
Legions of spears around thee, for thy blood
Leagued in one furious thirst ? Unwise and rash ! 665
To night thou slumber'st not unguarded, sleep ;
And if Rowena mingle with thy dreams,
Sleep calmly, breathingly as now ! He wakes—
Oh, hateful even in slumber that harsh name
Grates on his sense.”—His eyes unfold, nor start, 670
So soft the vision ; wonder's self is calm,
And quaffs it in with mild unshrinking gaze.
Her long bright hair, like threads of silver streak
The moonlight, her fair forehead's marble arch
Wild joyous fearfulness, extatic doubt, 675

Bathe with the dewyness of melting snow,
Ere yet unblanch'd its stainless glitter pure.
Oh, soft and slow that melody of mien
Steals o'er the slumberer, ere the reason woke,
The sense was drunken, one hand folded her's 680
That answer'd not its pressure, nor withdrew,
Tremulous, yet motionless: his rising head
Found on her other arm such pillowing soft,
As the fond ringdove on its mate's smooth down.
They spake not, moved not. 'Tis the noon of night, 685
Hour known to Samor not by sign or sound
Of man's wise art to mark the fleeting time,
Nor changing of the starry heavens; but e'er
By motion of the secret soul, by calm
Habitual sliding into the sooth'd heart, 690
Distinct from turbulent day and weary eve,
Emeric's own hour, her consecrated spot
In his life's wilderness. She comes, she comes,
The clouds have dropt her from their silvery folds;
The mild air wafts her, the rank earth impure 695
Stainless she skims, distrust, doubt, fear, no place
Find in the sinless candour of her mien.

In languid soft security she melts
On Samor's fever'd soul, she fills his sense,
Her softness like the nightingale's first notes 700
After rude evening, o'er his passion steals :
He cast not off Rowena's hand, it fell
As from a dead man's grasp ; slow rose his head
From its fair zone, as from a bank of snow
The winter traveller, by its smoothness guil'd 705
Almost to deathful sleep ; he dares not now
Welcome that heavenly visitant, nor could,
Nor would he her mild rescue bid depart.
Nor dares he now with chill abhorrence shrink
From that empassion'd Lady ; on his lips 710
Clung wretched, pale, beseechingness, that framed
Nor word nor sound. But time for thought in her
Gave time for shame, for struggling pride gave time.
"Thou deem'st me loose, wild, wanton, deem'st me come
To lure thee with light sweets of lawless love, 715
Hunting mine own shame through the midnight woods.
Oh false, all false.—How thee shall I persuade,
Aye me ! that scarce persuade myself, 'twas chance,
'Twas fate, 'twas ministration of bad spirits,

That led me thoughtless, hopeless—did I say 720

Hopeless? yet scorn not thou, the lightest won

Are oft best won. Oh why, ere now so mild,

So gentle, why so stern, so ghastly still?"

"Thou lov'st my pride, my honour, my renown.

Now, Queen Rowena, may'st thou do a deed 725

Shall make my pride thine own, make thee my fount

Of honour, all my noontide of renown

On thee in all its golden brilliance shine;

And if henceforth man's voice cry out, High deeds

Hath Samor's arm achiev'd, thy heart shall bound 730

And thy lips answer, 'Mine! all mine!' and I

Will bless thee, thank thee, praise thee for that truth."

O'er proud Rowena past his solemn voice

Tremendously delightful, as the sound

Of thunder over Jove's bolt-minist'ring bird, 735

That sternly rocks on th' agitated air.

"Speak, speak, 'tis hours, 'tis years until 'tis done."

Return'd one brief, one powerful word—"Depart."

She struggled yet to wear the lofty light

That flush'd her brow, she struggled, and she fell 740

Her white arms round his neck. Light as the breeze

Pass'd over his her cheek. Then back
She started, seiz'd her courser's rein; far, far
The rocks gave answer to its trampling hoofs.

To solitude, to peace, ah, not to peace !
Was Samor left ; large dewy beads distil
From his full brow, as from the forest leaves
The sunny icicle : fierce, merciless,
Relentless inquest o'er himself he holds,
In him a sin in thought is sin in deed. 750

“ And I, that on the frantic waxen wings
Of mine own arrogance, have deem'd my soul
Kindred and heritor of that rich bliss
That bathes the Angels radiant wings in strength,
That wander'd o'er this sublunary wild 755
As with a charter'd scorn, that mix'd with men
But in disdainful mastery to o'er-rule
Their dim and wavering destinies, that took
With noble violence admiring earth,
O'er me hath passion wound her silken nets ; 760
And that soft Dalila, lascivious sin,
Shorn my full honours. Now, who clothed my steps
With darkness, dread, and danger, hung my arms

With light'ning, kept at bay the envious death
That feasts upon the famous of mankind; 765
God, God abandons me. So farewell pride,
And with pride farewell strength, the burning hope,
Glad agonies, brave bliss of holy war,
Transports of trampling on my country's foes,
And all the beauty, majesty, renown, 770
Vengeance, of thy triumphal state. Ye too,
Farewell, soft midnights, delicate regards
Fix'd on me from fond eyes yet bright from heaven,
Mild agitations of the purer sense,
Fresh bloomings of my faded joys, ye dreams 775
Lovelier than actual bliss, as heaven than earth,
Emeric abandons me. For how can snow
Drop on this foul earth stainless? how canst thou
Visit unsullied thy sad shrine defil'd,
Or beam upon this lust-benighted heart? 780
Oh never felt before, the fear to front
Mine own past life, the ignoble shame that burns
At human sight, and memory that ne'er sleeps;
Heart-sickening at its own deformities,
A miserable welcome bid I ye, 785

Come, dismal comforters, faint-footed guides,
Teach me the hate of life, the dread of death."

And Samor wander'd on, not now with scope
Resolv'd, and steady purpose that absorb'd
And fix'd on one stern centre all his soul, 790
True as the arrow to its mark. Now where,
Whither, is all indifferent, he pursues
The wildering of the forest track, the brook
Winding its lucid error: two sad days
And chance hath led him back to Wye's green bank. 795

Sudden before him swept in gallant pack,
Fleet hounds, whose keen scent quaff'd the morning dews.
Sole on their track a noble huntsman bow'd
O'er his steed's high-curv'd neck. But when he saw
Samor, that scarce his coming mark'd or heard, 800
He vaulted from his uncheck'd steed so fleet,
The courser seem'd to feel it not, but on
Went stately bounding down the glen. But he
Unslung his bugle horn, his hunting spear
Cast to the winds, and held his burnish'd sword 805
To heaven, as though to paragon its light.

"Oh, thunderer Thor, but one bold prayer of mine

E'er scaled thy heavens, and that, munificent,
I thank thee for thy granting. Samor now,
Now Christian, now baptiz'd in German blood, 810
Avenger, we are met, and ere we part,
Earth must be ruddier with some blood of ours."

" Noble Argantyr, deem not thou unknown
Thy name, thy presence, nor forgot, how thou,
When Murther quaff'd his glut on Ambri plain, 815
Didst hold thy jealous steel aloft, lest stain
From gore by treason shed, should dim its gleam ;
And when I burst my iron toils, and won
My dangerous safety, how indignant joy
Stood bathing thy stern brow. Brave Anglian, thou, 820
But thou, of German race, to faint sloth chill'st
My sword's quick wrath."—" What, Samor out of love
With strife, with music of conflicting steel ?
Hath Abisa's pale blood so quench'd his fire ?
Were't not I now could force my glorious will, 825
Yea, I could sue thee, Briton, for the joy.
Thou wilt not credit, air hath been defil'd
With creeping whispers cold, that I, I shrunk
To second in his dangers that brave boy,

As though Argantyr would partake a foe, 830
And with division spiritless and base,
Meted out his province in one man to slay,
Hear ; ‘ Well the famous Anglian won his half
Of that great conquest !’ But I have thee now
Whole, undivided, now, or man, or more, 835
If aught be mortal in thee, guard that spot,
My steel will search it,”—“ Samor is not now
As Samor was, but knows not yet to scorn
Such brave allurements.” Forth his anlace flash’d,
But not as wont, uplooks he to the sky ; 840
He thinks not now, oh, if I fall, float near,
My Emeric, that no Angel’s voice but thine
Welcome thy Samor to his opening heaven :
And if I vanquish, Britain and the Lord
Take to your hecatomb one Saxon more. 845

But on Argantyr sprung, as wanton boy
To the cool health of summer streamlet pure :
Around, above, beneath his winged sword
Leaps in its fiery joy, red, fierce and far
As from a midnight furnace start the sparks. 850
As brazen statue on proud palace top,

Shakes off the pelting tempest, so endur'd
Samor, but not in patient hope austere
Of victory ; but habitual skill and power
Protracting long the cold indifferent strife ; 855
Till twice that sword that in its downward sweep
Flash'd the white sunlight, cloudy rose and dim
With ominous purple : then his nature burst
Its languid bonds, not front alone to front ;
But soul to soul the riot of the fight 860
They mingle, like to giddy chariot wheels
The whirling of their swords, as fierce the din
Of buckler brast, helm riven, and breastplate cloven,
As when the polar wind the ice field rends.
Such nobleness sublime of hideous fight 865
From Ilion's towers her floating mantled dames
Saw not, nor Thebes, when Capaneus call'd down
Jove's thunder, and disdain'd its fall, nor pride
Of later Bards, when mad Orlando met
On that frail bridge the giant Sárzan king, 870
And with him in the boiling flood dash'd down,
Till that fond eagerness, that brave delight
O'erpower'd frail nature, breathless each, and each

Careless, yet conscious of deep trenching wounds,
For admiration paus'd, for hope, for power 875
To satiate the unwearying strong desire.

Lo, the far hills Argantyr first descried
Radiant with spearmen, and he cried, " Away,
'Tis Hengist with his bloody bands, I know
The motion of his crest; brave Chief, away."— 880
" Away ! and leave Argantyr here to boast
Samor hath fled him !"—" Oh, we meet again ;
Thou art a quarry for the Gods, base lance
Must ne'er vaunt blood of thine. Argantyr spares 885
But for himself such noble game. Still here !
Froward and furious, if thou need'st must die,
Why so must I; fell Hengist will not spare
An inch of quivering life on all thy limbs.
And I with such a jealous lust pursue
A noble conquest o'er thee, I must shield 890
Thy life with mine, for my peculiar fame ;
Freely mine own death on the hazard cast
For such a precious stake as slaying thee."

As through dusk twilight stolen, love-breathless maid
For interchange of gentle vows, by noise 895

Startled of envious footstep, chides away
Her lingering youth, yet for his lingering loves,
Till her fond force hath driven him from her side;
So earnest the brave Anglian sued to flight
Reluctant Samor; o'er his sword hilt bow'd, 900
Stood sorrowing for the wounds himself had made,
That marr'd his speedier flight. Anon approach'd
Hengist, encircled by his state of spears,
And bright Rowena by his side. "But now
Thy steed along our camp rush'd masterless, 905
Therefore we seek thee, Anglian. How! thou bleedst!
And strange! thy foeman bites not the red earth.
What might hath scathless met Argantyr's steel?"

"He, gasp'd he here in death, thy soul would dance,
The Wanderer!"—"He! he wars but on soft boys, 910
He dare not front Argantyr."—"False, 'tis false!"
Burst from Rowena; "he dares deeds our Gods
Had shrunk from (Hengist's cloudy brow she mark'd),
Or whence his proud claim to my father's hate?"
"Where hath the Recreant fled? Pursue, pursue!" 915
Cried Hengist. "Hast thou wings to cleave the air?
Or windest the deep bosom of the earth,

Thou may'st o'ertake. Yet Samor is not now,"
He said, "as Samor was; were Samor more,
Earth and Argantyr had been wed erenow." 920

So spake the Anglian; leap'd Rowena's heart
In hope, in shame, in anguish, in delight.
"Oh, hath my softness sunk so deep to change
Thy steadfast nature, yet thus chang'd, thy might
Wrests honour from thy foeman's lips."—"Oh now," 925
Laughing in baffled bitterness, exclaim'd
The Saxon King, "now weave we softer nets
To toil this dangerous Wanderer. What say'st thou,
Fair-ey'd Rowena, now thou hast cast off
Thy fond, thy lovesick Vortigern? perchance 930
The sunshine of thy beauty might melt down
This savage to a tame submissive slave."

Rowena, whose proud look with beauteous awe
Smote her beholders, wore her loveliness
As though she gloried in its power; now close 935
Crowded o'er all her face her mantle's folds,
That ill conceal'd the purple fire within.
Then forward past they to the Saxon camp.

But far by Wye's green marge had Samor fled,

Till now the ebbing blood with short quick throb 940
Beat at his heart, his languid feet were clogg'd
With the thick forest leaves, the keen air search'd
With a cold thrill his wounds. He falls, scarce sobs ;
“ Merciful God, on this in all my life
The sole, the single day I would not die.” 945
Then faint, and sickly, an oppressive rest
Seal'd sight and sense. When sleep fell on him, eve
Was gathering fast, but when he woke, morn shot
From the gray east her faint pellucid light.
His blood was staunch'd, a soothing coolness lay 950
On his mild wounds, the rude arch of the boughs
Seem'd woven with officious care to veil
The bright Sun from his eyelids ; the dry leaves
Were gathered round him, like a feathery couch.
He lay and listen'd, a soft step approach'd 955
Light as the wren along the unshaking spray,
And o'er him lean'd a maiden pale, yet blithe
With tinge of joy, that settled hue.—“ Is't thou,
Gentle Myfanwy ?” “ Blessings on thy waking ;
I long'd to tell thee what sweet dreams have sooth'd 960
My sorrows since we parted ; in my sleep

My parents came, and with them that fond youth,
And they smil'd on him kindly. 'Think'st thou God
Can have such mercy on sins dark as mine?"

" God's plenteous mercies on thee for thy care 965

Of me, sweet maiden."—" Pardon me, oh thou,
Heaven pardon me, when first I saw thee cold,
Helpless, and bleeding, evil thoughts arose
Of my poor Abisa's untimely death."

But deeper meditation Samor's mind 970

Beset. " Almighty, truly thou ordain'st
Wisdom from baby lips; what moral high
Breathes in this simple maid's light-hearted smiles !

And I, for wisdom fam'd, for pride of mind,
Insulted with weak doubts thy infinite, 975

Illimitable goodness; she so soft,

So delicate, so sinful and so sad,

Springs on her airy plumes of hope to thee.

Oh, were mine guilt of act not thought, the stain

Thy fount of living mercy might efface." 980

He prest a kiss upon her cheek so pure

Even Abisa had granted it.—" Farewell,

My kind preserver, cherish thou thy hope,

As 'twere an infant fondling on thy breast."

And fresh with hope, like gay stag newly bath'd, 985

Forth on his voyage lone the Avenger past.

BOOK VIII.

HIS path is 'mid the Cambrian mountains wild ;
The many fountains that well wandering down
Plinlimmon's huge round side their murmurs smooth
Float round him ; Idris, that like warrior old
His batter'd and fantastic helmet rears, 5
Scattering the elements wrath, frowns o'er his way
A broad irregular duskiness. Aloof
Snowdon, the triple-headed giant, soars,
Clouds rolling half way down his rugged sides.

Slow as he trod amid their dizzy heights, 10
Their silences and dimly mingling sounds,
Rushing of torrents, roar of prison'd winds ;
O'er all his wounded soul flow'd strength, and pride,
And hardihood ; again his front soar'd up

To commerce with the skies, and frank and bold 15
His majesty of step his rugged path
Imprinted. So in old poetic faith
Hyperion from his native Delian bowers,
'Mid the rich music of those sisters nine,
Walk'd the bright heights of Helicon, and shook 20
His forehead's clustering glories wide, and flush'd
The smoothness of his fair immortal face
With purple Godhead. Whence, ye mountains, whence
The spirit that within your secret caves
Holds kindred with man's soul? Is't that your pomp 25
Of exaltation, your ærial crowns
In their heaven-scaling rivalry cast forth
Bold sympathies of loftiness, and scorn
Contagious? or in that your purer air,
Where fresh and virgin from its golden fount, 30
Lies the fine light at morning, or at eve
Melts upward and resolves itself from earth,
And with its last clear trembling round ye clings;
The soul, unwound its coarse material chains,
Basks in its own divinity, and feels 35
There in the verge and portal of the heavens,

The neighbourhood of brighter worlds unseen?
Where the blue Glasslyn hurries her fleet course
To wanton on the yellow level sands,
On either side in sheer ascent abrupt 40
The rocks, like barriers that in elder time
Wall'd the huge cities of the Anakim,
Upblacken to the sky, whose tender blue
With mild relief salutes th' o'erlabour'd sight.
There on the scanty slippery way, that winds 45
With the stream's windings, Samor loiters on.
But who art thou, that in the Avenger's path
Standest in dark serenity? what joy
Instinct amid thy thick black locks reveals
The full voluptuous quietude within? 50
Oh, Prophet! in thy wanderings wide and far
Amid the pregnant hours of future time,
Haply the form of Samor, disarray'd
Calamity's sad vesture, hath appear'd
In plenitude of glory. Hence thine eye 55
With recognition glad and bright salutes
The Man of Fate. To earth that Prophet old
Bow'd down, then look'd he on the waters dark,

Then upward to the mountains. "Stony earth,
Within thy secret bosom feel'st not thou 60
A wonderous presence? dwells not, thou blue stream,
Under thy depth of waves a silent awe?—
Yea, Snowdon, lift thou up in sternest pride
Thy cloudy mantled brow; ye know him all,
Ye know the Avenger."—"Merlin, mock not thou 65
Thy fellow creature of the dust, the child
Of sin and sorrow, with o'erlabour'd phrase,
Abasing the immortal elements
From their high calm indifference to sense
Of our light motions. Simple truth-severe 70
Best seemeth aged lips; oh, holy famed
And sage, how ill strong Wisdom's voice melts down
To the faint chime of flattery."—"Poor of pride!
Feeble of hope! thou seest thyself forlorn,
An hunted wanderer in thy native land. 75
I see thee clad in victory and revenge,
Thy glory sailing wide on all the winds,
Beautiful with thy blessings at thy feet
Thy own fair Britain, Fate so freely spreads
Her mystic volume to my sight—"Oh, blind, 80

And ignorant as blind our insect race !
The mole would count the sunbeams, the blind worm
Search the hid jewels in the depths of earth,
And man, dim dreamer, would invade the heavens,
Self-seated in the Almighty's councils read 85
The secrets of Omniscience, yea, with gaze
Familiar scrutinize the Inscrutable.
I tell thee, Merlin, that the soul of man
Is destiny on earth ; God gave us limbs
To execute, and intellect to will 90
Or good or evil, and his unseen Spirit
Our appetites of holiness, else faint
And wavering doth corroborate : hence man's prides,
Man's glories, and man's virtues all are God's.
If yet this heart unwearied may bear on, 95
Nor from its holy purpose faintly swerve,
The Lord be prais'd, its fate is pride and joy.
But if, and oh the peril ! it play false
Its country's lofty hazard, shall it shift
On wayward destiny its sloth and sin ? 100
Evil is not, where man no evil wills,
And good is not, where will not man and God."

“ Chief wise as brave, as to our feeble sight
Yon pebble’s slight circumference, the Past,
The Present, and the Future of this world 105
Are to the All-seeing vision ; oft doth Heaven
In sign and symbol duskily reveal
The unborn future ; oft Fate’s chariot wheels
Are harbinger’d by voices that proclaim
The fashion of their coming ; gifted Seers 110
Feel on their lips articulate the deeds
Of later days, and dim oracular sights
Crowd the weak eyes, till pall’d attention faint
To dizziness.” — “ Oh, Merlin, time hath been
When in the guilty cities the Lord’s voice 115
Hath spoken by his Prophets, hath made quail
By apparitions ominous and dire
Strong empires on their unassailed height.
But oh, for us of this devoted isle,
Drench’d with the vials of Almighty wrath, 120
To gaze up, and beseech the clouds to rain
Bright miracles on this poor speck of earth.”
“ Shame choke thy speech, despondent slanderer ! thee
Avenger ! this from thee ! Away ! my lips

Burn with the fire of heaven, my heart flows o'er 125

With gladness and with glory. Peerless Isle,

How dost thou sit amid thy blue domain

Of ocean, like a sceptred Queen ! The bonds

Like flax have wither'd from thy comely limbs.

Thou, the strong freedom of thy untam'd locks 130

Shaking abroad, adornest God's fair world.

Thou noblest Eden of man's fallen state,

Apart and sever'd from the common earth,

Even like a precious jewel, deep and far

In the abyss of time thy dawn of pride 135

Still with a fuller and more constant blaze

Grows to its broad meridian, and Time's rolls

Are silent of thy setting. Oh, how fair

The steps of freemen in thy vales of peace;

Thy broad towns teem with wealth, thy yellow fields

Laugh in their full fertility ; thy bays 141

Whiten and glisten with thy myriad barks.

The Angels love thee, and the airs of heaven

Are gladden'd by thy holy hymns, while Faith

Sits on thy altars, like a nestling dove, 145

In unattainted snowyness of plume."

“ Now, by my soul, thou strange and solemn Man,
Mistrust thee more I dare not ; be't a dream
Or revelation of immortal truth,
Of Britain's fame I cannot choose but hear 150
With a child's transport.”—Then the Prophet shook
The dark profusion of his swelling hair
With a stern triumph ; then his aged eye
Grew restless with delight : his thin white hand
Closing around the Baron's arm, lay there 155
Like a hard glove of steel. He led him on,
Till now the black and shaggy pass spread out
To a green quiet valley, after named
The Bed of Gelert, that too-faithful hound
Slain fondly by his erring Lord : the stream 160
Here curl'd more wanton, lightly wafting down
The last thin golden leaves the alders dropt,
Like fairy barges skimming the blue waves.
That stream o'erpass'd, rightward their silent way
Lay to the foot of Snowdon. Pause was none, 165
They front the steep ascent, and upward wind
A long, sheer, toilsome path, their footfalls struck
Upon the black bare stillness, audible

As in thick forest the lone woodman's axe.
'Twas strange, yet slack'd not that old reverend Man
His upward step, as though the mountain air 171
Were his peculiar element, still his breath
Respir'd unlabouring, lively bounded on
His limbs, late slow and tremulous. Three long hours,
Now front to front upon that topmost peak, 175
Erwydfa, sit they motionless, alone :
As when two vultures on some broken tower,
That beetles o'er a dismal battle field,
In dark and greedy patience ruminate
Their evening feast, a stillness as of sleep 180
Heaves in their ruffled plumes, their deep bright eyes
Half clos'd in languid rest ; so undisturb'd,
So lofty, sate the Avenger and the Seer.
The atmosphere, that palls our restless world,
Lay coiling in its murky folds below : 185
So in some regal theatre, when droops
The unfolding curtain, and within it shrouds
The high disastrous passions, crimes, and woes
Erewhile that fretted on its pomp of scene ;
Thus Earth, with all its solemn tragedies, 190

Heroic vauntings, sumptuous imagings,
Set in its veil of darkness from their sight.
The filmless, the pellucid heaven above
One broad pure sheet of sunlight.—“ Gifted Man,
(Cried Samor,) wherefore to this desolate 195
Untrodden !”—“ Ha ! untrodden ! know ye not,
Where coarse humanity defiles not, there
The snowy-footed Angels lightly skim
The taintless soil, the fragrance of their plumes
Fans the pure air where chokes no breath of sin 200
The limpid current ? Desolate ! the motes
That flicker in the sun are few and rare
To the immortal faces that smile down
Exquisite transport on the ravish'd sense.
Here, from their kindred elements, emanate 205
The festive creatures of the heavenly fields,
Glories, and Mercies, and Beatitudes ;
Some dropping on the silent summer dew,
Some trembling on the rainbow's violet verge,
Some rarely chariotteering on the wings 210
Of the mild winds, in moonlight some. Why shakes
The Man of Vengeance ? wherefore of mine hand

This passionate wringing?"—"Tell me, truly tell;
The name of Emeric, from some mild-lipp'd tone
Hath it e'er trembled on thine ear? Old Man, 215
Is't sin to say her presence might adorn
That gentle company?"—"To souls like thine,
Warrior, Heaven grants sweet intercourse and free
With its beatified."—"Ah, now thou rak'st
The ashes of a buried grief: gone all, 220
My gentle visitations broken off,
My delicate discoursings silent, ceas'd!
Oh, I talk idly, Prophet, speak thou on."

"Aye, Warrior, and of mild and soft no more;
Grandeurs there are, to which the gates of heaven 225
Set wide their burnish'd portals: midnight feels
Cherubic splendours ranging her dun gloom,
The tempests are ennobled by the state
Of high seraphic motion. I have seen,
I, Merlin, have beheld. It stood in light, 230
It spake in sounds for earth's gross winds too pure.
Between the midnight and the morn 'twas here
I lay, I know not if I slept or woke,
Yet mine eyes saw. Long, long this heart had yearn'd,

'Mid those rich passings and majestic shows 235
For shape distinct, and palpable clear sound.
It burst at length, yea, front to front it stood,
The Immortal Presence. I clench'd up the dust
In the agony and rapture of my fear,
And my soul wept with terror and deep joy. 240
It stood upon the winds, an Angel plumed,
And mail'd and crown'd ; his plumes cast forth a tinge
Like blood on th' air around : his arms, in shape
Ethereal panoply complete, in hue
The moonlight on the dark Llanberis lake, 245
A bright blue rippling glitter ; for the crown,
Palm leaves of orient light his brow enwreath'd,
That bloom'd in fair divinity of wrath,
And beautiful relentlessness austere.
Knowledge was in my heart, and on my lips ; 250
I felt him, who he was.—“ Archangel ! hail,
Destroyer ! art not thou God's Delegate,
To break the glassy glories of this world ?
The gem-knosp'd diadem, the ivory ball,
Sceptre and sword, imperial mantle broad, 255
The Lord of Nations, Thundershaft of war,

Are glorious on the pale submissive earth :
Thou com'st, and lo, for throne, for sword, for king,
Bare ashes and thin dust. Thou art, that aye
The rich-tower'd cities smoulder'st to pale heaps 260
Of lazy moss-stones, and aye after thee
Hoots Desolation like a dank-wing'd owl
Upon the marble palaces of Kings.
Thou wert, when old Assyrian Niniveh
Sank to a pool of waters, waste and foul ; 265
Thou, when the Median's brow the massy tiar
Let fall, and when the Grecian's brazen throne
Sever'd and split to the four winds ; and now
Consummatest thy work of wreck and scorn,
Even on Rome's Cæsars, making the earth sick 270
Of its own hollowness. Archangel ! Hail,
Vicegerent of destruction, Cupbearer,
That pour'st the bitter liquor of Heaven's wrath,
A lamentable homage pay I thee,
And sue thee tell if Britain's days are full, 275
Her lips for thy sad beverage ripe. Thereat
Earthward his sunny spear its lurid point
Declin'd, and lo, a White Horse, through the land

Ranging in stately speed ; our city gates
Shrunk open at his coming, our fair fields 280
Wither'd before him, so his fiery breath
Flar'd broad amazement through the gasping land.
Triumph was in the trampling of his feet,
And the strong joy of mockery, for he trod
On broken principalities ; his mane 285
Familiar Conquest, as a rushing wind,
Fann'd in loose brilliant streamings."—"False-lipp'd Seer,
Thou spak'st of gladness, and thy ominous tone
Is darkness and dismay."—"Hark, Warrior, hark:
That wanton mane was trail'd down to the dust, 290
That fiery trampling falter'd to dull dread,
That pale victorious steed Thee, Thee I saw,
Visible as thou stand'st, with mastering arm
Drag down, and on his strong and baffled neck
Full trod thy iron-sandal'd heel. The sight 295
Was wine unto my soul, and I laugh'd out,
And mock'd the ruinous Seraph in the clouds.
" Yet stood he in the quiet of his wrath,
Angelic Expectation, that awaits
Calmly till God accomplish God's high will, 300

Full on his brow. Then stoop'd the spear again,
And lo, Seven Steeds, like that pale One, bestrode
The patient Isle, and they that on them rode
Wore diadem and regal pall; then rose
To war against those royal riders fierce, 305
From a round table, Knights in sunlike arms,
Shields bossy with rich impress quaint, and fair
Their coursers, as the fire-hoof'd steeds of Morn.
To white-arm'd Ladies in a stately court
Bards hymn'd the deeds of that fine chivalry, 310
And their crown'd Captain's title smote mine ear,
'Arthur of Bretagne.'—Years went rolling on,
Cloudy, discordant, and tempestuous years,
For the sword reap'd the harvest of the land,
And battle was the may-game of her sons. 315
And lo, a Raven o'er the Eastern sea
Swoop'd desolation on the Isle; her wings
Blasted wheree'er they wav'd, the earth wept blood
In her foul talons gripe. But he that rode
On the White Steed, the Sovereign of the Land, 320
(Patience, Avenger, patience!) fair was he,
That Sovereign, as the virgin's spring-tide dream,

Holy as new anointed Christian Priest,
Valiant as warrior burnish'd for the fight,
Fond and extatic, as love-dreaming Bard, 325
Solemn and wise, as old Philosopher,
Stately, as kingborn lion in the wood ;
As he his fine face heavenward turn'd in prayer,
The Angels bent down from their throning clouds,
To wonder at that admirable King, 330
Sky-wandering voices peal'd in transport out—
' Alfred !' the baffled Raven cower'd aloof,
The isle look'd up to heaven in peace and joy.

“ Still stood he there, betwixt me and the sun,
Th' Archangel ; not in sleep, nor senselessness 335
Absorb'd, but terrible inaction spread
Over his innate menace. Oh, I strove,
Yet dared not hope the dregs of wrath were drain'd,
The mission of dismay fulfill'd and done ;
Yet had those wings of fatal hue droop'd down 340
In folded motionlessness, wreathy light
Had crept and wound around that dusky spear,
Silvering its perilous darkness. Dropt at once
That tender light away ; at once those wings
Started asunder, and spread wide and red 345

The rain of desolation, thicker roll'd
The pedestal of clouds whereon he stood,
As to bear up the effort of his wrath.
Again the Eastern Raven snuff'd our air,
The frantic White Horse laved his hoofs in blood, 350
Till from the Southern Continent sprung forth
A Leopard, on the ocean shore he ramp'd.
Woe to the White Horse, to the Raven woe,
Woe for the title of the Leopard Lord,
The Conqueror ! and a Bell I heard, that sway'd 355
Along the isle, and froze it into peace
With its majestic tyranny of sound.

“ But he, upon the air, th' Archangel, he,
The summons of whose eye from climes remote
Beckon'd those grisly ministers of wrath, 360
Northward he look'd, no northern ruin came.
To th' East, there all was still. The South, nor shape
Nor sound. The West, calm stretch'd th' unruffled sea.
Ha ! thought I, earth hath now no ruin more,
The race of havock is extinct for us, 665
Angel of wreck away ! thy task is o'er ;
Majestic Mischief, from our isle away !

He went not ; as an earthquake's second shock,

With dreary longing watch'd I what might come ;
Moments were years ; and lo, the Island's sons 370
Nor Briton they, nor Saxon, nor the stock
Of those new comers, but from each had flow'd
All qualities of honour and renown,
The foul dishonest dregs had fum'd away,
And the rich quintessence, unmix'd, unsoil'd, 375
An harmony of energies sublime,
Knit in that high-brow'd people. Courtesy,
Death-scorning valour, Fame's immortal thirst,
And honour inbreath'd like the life of life.

Then rose that strong Archangel, and he smote 380
The bosom of the land ; at once leap'd up
That mighty people. Here a Snow-white Rose,
And there a Red, with fatal blossoming,
And deadly fragrance, maddening all the land.
I heard, I saw—ah, impious sights and sounds ! 385
Two war-cries in one tongue, two banner-rolls
Wov'n in one loom, two lances from one forge,
Two children from one womb in conflict met ;
'Gainst brother brother's blood cried out to heaven,
And he that rent the vizor of his foe, 390

Look'd through the shatter'd bars, and saw his son.

Ha, Britain! in thine entrails dost thou flesh

Thy ravine! thy Baronial castles blaze

With firebrands from their hospitable hearths.

“ Mercy, I cried aloud, thou Merciless! 395

Destroy no more, Destroyer! Prone I fell,

And hid mine aching eyes deep in the dust;

So from my rocking memory to shut out

Those wars unnatural. Pass'd a sound at length

As of a Wild Boar hunted to his death; 400

I raised mine head, still there the Archangel stood;

Another pause, another gleam of hope;

But in that quiet interval me-seem'd

Trumpetings as of victory from the sea,

Flow'd o'er the Isle, and glories beam'd abroad 405

From a triumphant throne, where sate elate

A Virgin: all around her Poets harps

Strew'd flowers of amaranth blooming; and methought

Was joy and solemn welcoming in heaven

Of a pure incense, that from all the Isle 410

Soar'd to the unapproach'd throne of God.

“ Then saw I through the Isle, a River broad

And full, and they that drank thereof look'd up
Like children dropt forth from a nobler world,
So powerful that proud water work'd within, 415
Freshening the body and the soul : and each
Beauty array'd and a frank simple strength.
The river's name was Freedom : her fair tide
So pleasant thrall'd mine eye, I saw not rise
Th' Archangel's spear : th' earth's reeling woke me then,
For lo, upon a throne, a gallant Prince, 421
That with misguided sceptre strove to check
That powerful stream : whereat the rebel tide
Swell'd up with indignation, and aloof
Stood gathering its high-crested waves ; down came 425
The deluge, that fair throne, and all its strong
Nobility of pillars, with a crash
Came to the earth, while they that drank rush'd out
Inebriate with excess of that fierce stream,
And cast a bloody sacrifice, that head 430
Endiadem'd with royalty, to glut
The tide implacable. 'Tis sad to hear,
Aye Samor, what was it to see ! Brave Chief,
Cold winter leads the pleasant summer on,

The night must darken ere the morning dawn ; 435
The summer came, the morning dawn'd, I saw
The arch'd heavens open o'er the angelic shape,
And upward like a cloud he mingled in
To the sky's cloudiness. I cried aloud
' For ever !' the close settling in the heavens 440
Seem'd to reply ' For ever.' Not with him
Pass'd off my vision fair. Another throne
Stood by the venturous margin of that stream ;
Then merriment, and loose-harp'd wantonness
Smooth'd the late ruffled air ; immodest tones, 445
To which fair forms in dancing motion swam :
They paus'd, then dark around that throne it seem'd,
Whereat those holy hymns that scarce had ceas'd
To float up in their airy-winged course,
In faintness 'gan to tremble and break off ; 450
That stream again upgather'd its wak'd wrath,
And foamy menace. When behold, a fleet
Came tilting o'er the ocean waves, and cast
A Lady and a Warrior on the shore,
And kingly crowns around their brows august 455
Out blossom'd ; on the throne they took their seat,

Soar'd gladness on the wings of those pure hymns,
And the majestic stream in sunlight flow
And full rejoicing murmur, all its waves
Wafted around the high and steady throne. 460

Now listen with thy soul, not with thine ears,
Briton ! beside that stream a Tree sprang out,
With ever-mounting height, and amplitude
Aye-spreading ; deep in earth its gnarled roots
Struck down, as though to strengthen this frail world :
Its crown amid the clouds seem'd soaring up 466
For calm above earth's tossing and rude stir,
And its broad branching spread so wide, its shade
Lay upon distant realms ; one golden bright,
Close by the cradle of the infant sun, 470
And others in new western worlds remote ;
And from that mystic river, Freedom, flow'd
A moisture like the sap of life, that fed
And fertilized the spacious Tree : the gales
Of ocean with a gorgeous freshness flush'd 475
The beauty of its foliage. Blossoms rare
Were on it ; holy deeds, that in the airs
Of heaven delicious smelt, and fruits on earth

Shower'd from it, making its sad visage smile,
For life and hope and bliss was in their taste. 480
Amid the state of boughs twin Eagles hung
Their eyries, Victory and Renown, and swung
In rapturous sport with the tumultuous winds,
But birds obscene, Dishonour, Shame, Dismay,
Scar'd by the light of the bright leaves, aloof 485
Far wheel'd their sullen flight, nor dar'd to stoop.
I saw the Nations graft their wasted trunks
From those broad boughs of beauty and of strength,
And dip their drain'd urns in that sacred stream.
But in the deep peculiar shade there stood 490
A Throne, an Altar, and a Senate-house.
Upon the throne a King sate, triple-crown'd
As by three kingdoms; voices eloquent
In harmony of discord fulmin'd forth
From that wise Senate: in swift intercourse 495
To and fro from heaven's crystal battlements
To that pure altar Angels stoop'd their flight.
And through the sunny boughs Philosophers
Held commerce with the skies, and drew from thence
The stars to suffer their sage scrutiny; 500

And Poets sent up through the bowery vault
Such lavish harmonies, the charm'd air seem'd
Forgetful of its twinkling motion dim.

“ Oh, admirable Tree ! thou shalt not fall
By foreign axe, or slow decay within ! 505
The tempests strengthen thee, the summer airs
Corrupt not, but adorn. Until that tide,
Freedom, the Inexhaustible, exhaust,
Lives thy coeval Immortality.”

The Prophet ceas'd : still Samor on his face, 510
That in solemnity of firm appeal
Look'd heavenward, with a passionate belief
Gaz'd, and a glad abandonment. “ Ha, Seer,
But now when thou begann'st 'twas noon of day,
And now deep night. Yea, Merlin, and by night 515
The Tamer of the White Steed must go forge
His iron curb.” Forth like a cataract
He burst, and bounded down the mountain side.
“ Yet once again, tumultuous world, I plunge
Amid thy mad abyss ; thou proud and fierce, 520
I come to break and tame thee ! see ye not,
Wise Hengist ! strong Caswallon ! how the sand

Is under your high towering thrones, the worm
Is in your showy palms."—And then a pause
Of tumult and proud trembling in his soul, 525
And, " False it was not, but a gleam vouchsaf'd
From the eternal orb of truth, the sense
That inbred and ingrain'd with my soul's life,
Hath made of Britain to this leaping heart
A sound not merely of deep love, but pride 530
Intense, and inborn majesty. I feel,
And from my earliest consciousness have felt,
That in the wide hereafter, where old Fate
Broods o'er the unravelling web of human things,
Wov'n by the Almighty, spreads thy tissue broad 135
In light, among the dark and mazy threads;
Vicissitude or mutability
Quench not its desolate lustre, on it winds
Unbroken, unattainted, unobscur'd."—

So pass'd he, who had seen, him then had deem'd, 540
By the proud steedlike tossing of his crest,
His motion like the uncheck'd August sun
Travelling the cloudless vacancy of air,
A monarch for his summer pastime gone

Into the shady grove, with courtier train, 545

And plumed steed, and laden sumpter mule,

Cool canopy, and velvet carpeting.

But he beneath the sleety winter sky,

Even his hard arms bit into by the keen

And searching airs, houseless, by hazard found 550

His coarse irregular fare, his drink, the ice

Toilsomely broken from the stiff black pool.

The furr'd wolf in the mossy oaken trunk

Lapp'd himself from the beating snow, but on

Went Samor with unshivering naked foot ; 555

The tempest from the mountain side tore down

The pine, like a scath'd trophy casting it

To moulder in the vale, but Samor's brow

Fronted the rude sky ; the free torrent felt

The ice its rushing turbulence o'ergrow, 560

Translucent in its cold captivity

It hung, but Samor burst the invading frost

From the untamed waters of his soul, and flow'd

Fetterless on his deep unfathom'd course.

And thou, wild Deva, how hast thou foregone 565

Thy summer music, and thy sunny play

Of eddies whitening 'mid thy channel stones ;
Bard-belov'd river, on whose green-fring'd brink
The fine imagining Grecian sure had feign'd
'Twixt thy smooth Naiads and the Sylvens rude 470
Of thy gray woods stol'n amorous intercourse ;
With such a slow reluctance thou delay'st
Under the dipping branches, that flap up
With every shifting motion of the wind,
Thy limpid moisture, and with serpent coil 575
Dost seem as thou would'st mingle with thyself
To wander o'er again the same lov'd course.
Now lies thy ice-bound bosom mute and flat
As marble pavement, thy o'ershadowing woods
One bare, brown leaflessness, that faintly drop 580
At intervals the heavy icicles,
Like tears upon a monumental stone.
But though thy merry waters and brisk leaves
Are silent, with their close-couch'd birds of song,
Even in this blank dead season music loves 585
Thy banks, and sounds harmonious must be heard
Even o'er thy frozen waters. 'Twas an hymn
From a low chapel by the river side,

Came struggling through the thick and hazy air,
And made a gushing as of tears flow o'er 590

The Wanderer's soul ; the form winds could not bow

Nor crazing tempests, those soft sounds amate ;

Those dewes of music melt into the frame

Of adamant, proof against the parching frost.

Under the porch he glided in, and knelt 595

Unnotic'd in the throng : whose motion sway'd

The beasts of ravine, he before his God

Wore nought distinctive, save of those bruis'd reeds,

Was he the sorest bruis'd, and deepest seem'd

The full devotion settling round his heart. 600

More musical than the music on that soul,

So long inured to things tumultuous, sights

Rugged and strange, and hurrying and distract,

Came the sensation of a face belov'd.

The calm of that old reverend brow, the glow 605

Of its thin silver locks, was like a flash

Of sunlight in the pauses of a storm.

Now hath the white-stol'd Bishop lifted up

His arms, his parting benison descends

Like summer rain upon his flock. Whose ear, 610

Oh, holy Germain, felt thy gentle tones
As Samor's? ah, when last thy saintly brow
For him look'd heavenward, and less tremulous then
Thy voice on him breath'd blessing, 'twas in times
Far brighter, at that jocund bridal hour 615
When Emeric, rosy between shame and joy,
Stood with him by the altar side:—" Thus live
In love till life's departure;"—Such thy prayer,
Ah, words how vain! sweet blessings unenjoy'd!

'The throng hath parted; in the House of God 620
Still knelt the armed man; with pressure strong
He clasp'd old Germain's hand—" Good Bishop, thou
Art skill'd in balancing our earthly sins,
I was a man, whose high ambitious head
Was among God's bright stars; I deem'd of earth, 625
As of a place whose dust my feet shook off
With an heaven-gifted scorn, so far, so high
Seem'd I above its tainting elevate.
At midnight, on my slumber came the sin,
I will not say how exquisite and fair, 630
Mine eyelids sprung apart to drink it in,
My soul leap'd up to clasp it, and the folds

Of passion, like a fiery robe, wrapt in
 My nature; I had fall'n, but bounteous Heaven
 Of its most blest permitted one t'extend. 635
 A snow-white arm of rescue."—"The hot tears
 Corrode and fret the warrior's brazen helm;
 I will not ask thee if thine outward eyes,
 Hath thy soul wept?"—"Aye, Bishop, tears of blood;
 Sorrow and shame weigh'd down my nerveless arm, 640
 And clipp'd th' aspiring plumage of my soul;
 From out mine own heart scorn hiss'd at me."—"Well,
 Strong Man of arms, hast fought the inward fight,
 And God remit thy sins, as I remit."—

"Then take thou to thine arms thy ancient friend." 645
 So saying, uprose Samor, like a star
 Out of the ocean, shining his bright face
 With the pure dews of penitence. But he,
 The old man, fell upon his neck and wept,
 As though th' endearing name, my Son, were voic'd 650
 By nature, not by saintly use, a sound
 Not of the lips, but th' overflowing heart.

Their's was a broken conference, drear thoughts
 Of anguish, desolation, and despair,

So moulded up with recollections sweet, 655
They made the sunken visage smile through tears;
A few fair roses shed on a brown heath,
A little honey in deep cups of gall:
Light bridal airs broke in upon by sounds
Funereal, shouts of triumph languishing 660
To the faint shriek of agony, direness forc'd
Into the fresh bowers of delight, and death,
Th' unjoyous, in the laughing feast of joy.

'Tis th' one poor luxury the wretched have
To speak of wretchedness—yet brief their speech, 665
“Vengeance and vigilance,” the stern adieu
Even in that hoary Bishop's ear, he went.

But by the Bishop's side, just there where knelt
Th' Avenger, a new form: 'twas man in garb,
But the thin fringing of the humid eye, 670
The delicate wanderings of the rosy veins,
The round full alabaster of the skin,
The briefness of the modest sliding step,
Something of womanly composure smooth,
Even in the close and girt habiliments, 675
Belied the stern appearance.—“Priest, with him

But now who parted, is my soul allied
In secret, close society ; his faith
Must be my faith, his God my God."—" Fair youth,
I question not by what imperious tie 680
Of admiration or strong love, thou'rt led ;
For as the Heavens with silent power intense
Draw upward the light mists and fogs of earth,
And steeping them in glory, hang them forth
Fresh, renovate, and radiant ; virtue holds 685
The like attractive influence, to her trains
Souls light and clayey-tinctur'd, till they catch
The fair contagion of her beauty, beam
With her imparted light. Hear, heathen youth,
Hear and believe."—As when beneath the nave 690
Tall arching, the Cathedral organ 'gins
Its prelude, lingeringly exquisite
Within retir'd the bashful sweetness dwells,
Anon like sunlight, or the floodgate rush
Of waters, bursts it forth, clear, solemn, full ; 695
It breaks upon the mazy fretted roof,
It coils up round the clustering pillars tall,
It leaps into the cell-like chapels, strikes

Beneath the pavement sepulchres, at once
The living temple is instinct, ablaze 700
With the uncontrolled exuberance of sound.

Even so with smoothing gentleness began
The mitred Preacher, winning audience close:
Till rising up, the rapid argument
Soar'd to the Empyrean, linking earth 705
With heaven by golden chains of eloquence;
Till the mind, all its faculties and powers
Lay floating, self-surrender'd in the deep
Of admiration. Wondrous 'twas to see,
With the transitions of the Holy Creed, 710
The workings of that regular bright face:
Now ashy blank, now glittering bright, now dew'd
With fast sad tears, now with a weeping smile,
Now heavy with droop'd eyelids, open now
With forehead arch'd in rapture; 'till at last 715
Ensued a gasping listening without breath.
But as the voice severe wound up the strain,
And from the heavenly history to enforce
The everlasting moral, 'gan extort
From the noviciate in the jealous faith 720

Passionless purity, and life sincere
From all the soft indulgences of sin ;
Forbidden in the secret heart to shrine
A dear unlawful image, to reserve
A sad and narrow sanctuary for desire : 725
Then stood in speechlessness, yet suppliant,
With snowy arms outstretch'd, and quivering loose,
The veiling mantle thrown in anguish back,
Confest the Woman ; starting from their band,
Like golden waters o'er a marble bed, 730
Flow'd out her long locks o'er her half-bare neck.

“ To tell me that in such cold solemn tones,
All, all unwelcome, bitter as it is,
I must believe, for its oppressive truth
Loads on my soul, and he believes it all. 735
To tell it me here, here, where all around
Linger his vestiges, where the warm air
Yet hath the motion of his breath, the sound
Of his departing footsteps beating yet
Upon my heart. Long sought ! and found in vain ! 740
In sunshine have I sought thee and in shade,
O'er mountain have I track'd thee, and through vale,

The clouds have wrapp'd thee, but I lost thee not,
The torrents drown'd thy track, but not from me,
I dared not meet thee, but I sought thee still ; 745
To me forbid, alone to me, what all
The coarse and common things of nature may ;
The airs of heaven may touch thee, I may not,
All human eyes behold thee—all but mine ;
And thou, the senseless, enviable dust 750
May'st cherish the round traces of his limbs,
His fresh fair image must away from me.
Oh, that I were the dust whereon thou tread'st,
Even though I felt thee not ! ”—And is this she,
The Virgin of the festal hall, who won 755
A kingdom for a smile, nor deign'd regard
Its winning, and who stoop'd to be a Queen ?
And is this she, whose coming on the earth
Was like the Morn in her impearled car,
Loftiest or loveliest which, 'twere bold to say ? 760
She whose enamouring scorn fell luxury-like
On her beholders, who seem'd glad to shrink
Beneath the wreath'd contempt of her full lip ?
This she, the Lady of the summer bark,

To whom the sunshine and the airs, and all 765
Th' inconstant waters play'd the courtier smooth,
That cast a human feeling of delight
At her bewitching presence o'er the blind
Unconscious forms of nature? Is this she!
Those rich lips, for a monarch's banquet meet, 770
Visiting the dust with frantic kiss, thus low,
Thus desolate, thus fallen, of her fall
Careless, so deep in shame, yet unasham'd!
But thou, Heaven reconcil'd, on earth the seal'd,
The anointed by the prophet's gladdening oils, 775
God's instrument, hath midnight now resum'd
Its spirit-wafting function? Emeric, she
On earth so mild, in her had anger seem'd
Unnatural as a war-song on a lute,
As blood upon the pinion of a dove. 780
In heaven hath she her heavenly qualities
Unlearnt? is she the angel now in all
But its best part, forgiveness? Can it be
Th' ungente North, the bleak and snowy air
Estrange her now? those elements of earth 785
But tyrannize beneath the moon, the stars

And spirits in their nature privileg'd
From heat and cold, from fevering and from frost,
Their pure and constant temperament maintain,
Glide through the storm serene, and rosy warm 790
Rove the frore winter air. Are sounds abroad,
That Samor from his mossy pillow, stretch'd
Under the oak, uplifts his head, and then
Like one bliss overcome, subsides again ?
Half sleep, half sense he lies, his nuptial hymn, 795
Articulate each gay and dancing word,
Distinct each delicate and dwelling fall,
Is somewhere in the air about him ; looks
Are on him of a bashful eye, too fond
To turn away, too timorous to fix 800
And rest unwavering. All the marriage rite
Is acting now anew ; the sunlight falls
Upon the gold clasp'd book of prayer, as then
It fell, and Germain speaks as Germain spake ;
And Emeric, on her cheek the tear is there, 805
Where then it hung in lucid trembling bright ;
The very fluttering of her yielded hand,
When gliding up her finger small, the ring

Made her his own for ever, throbs again
Upon his sensitive touch. He dares not move 810
Lest he should break the lovely bubble frail,
His tranc'd eyes stir not, lest they rove away
From that delicious sight, his open hand
Lies pulseless, lest the slightest change disturb
That exquisite sensation, so he lies, 815
Knowing all false, yet feeling all as true.

And it was false, yet why? that is indeed,
Which is to sense and sight. Ah, well beseems
Us, the strong insects of an April morn,
Steady and constant as the thistle's down 820
When winds are on it, lasting as the flake
Of spring snow on the warm and grassy ground,
Well beseems us, ourselves, our forms, our lives,
The earth we tread on, and the air we breathe,
The light and glassy peopling of a dream, 825
T' arraign our visions for their perishing,
And on their unreality to rail,
Ungrateful to the illusion, that deceives
To rapture, and unwise, to cast away
Sweet flowers because they are not amaranth. 830

Thou, Samor, nor ungrateful nor unwise,
That, 'scaping from this cold and dark below,
Dost spread thee out for thy peculiar joy
A land of fair imaginings, with shapes,
And sounds, and motions, and sweet stillnesses, 835
Dost give up all the moon beholds to woe
And tumult, but in some far quiet sphere
Findest thyself a pure companionship
With spirits thou did'st love, and who lov'd thee
While passionate and earthly sense was theirs. 840

BOOK IX.

WHO tracks the ship along the sea of storms?
Who through the dark haste of the wintry clouds
Pierceth to where the planet in retired
And constant motion the blue arch of heaven
Traverseth? Sometimes on the mountain top 5
Of some huge wave the reappearing bark
Takes its high stand, with pennon fluttering far
And cautious sail half furl'd, yet eminent
As of th' assaulting element in disdain.
Sometimes amid' the darkness falling off, 10
And scattering from its crystal sphere away,
Bursts out the argent orb refresh'd, and shews
Its lamp unquenchable. Thou voyager
'Mid the rude waves of desolation, Star
Of Britain's gloomy night, so bafflest thou 15

My swift poetic vision ! now the waves
 Ride o'er thee, now the clouds devour thee up,
 And thou art lost to sight, and dare I say
 Lost to thy immortality of song.

Thee too anon I see emerging proud 20
 From the dusk billows of calamity,
 That swol'n and haughty from the recent wreck
 Of thy compatriot navy, thee assail
 With their accumulated weight of surge,
 Thou top'st some high-brow'd wave, and shaking off 25
 On either side their fury, brandishest
 Thy solitary banner. Thee I see,
 Within th' embosoming midnight of the land,
 On gliding with smooth motion undisturb'd,
 And through the glimpses of the breaking gloom, 30
 Sometimes a solemn beauty sheddest forth
 On the distemper'd face of human things.

Full in the centre of Caer Ebranc* stood
 A temple, by the August Severus rear'd
 To Mavors the Implacable; what time 35
 That Cæsar stoop'd his eagles on the wreck

* York.

Of British freedom, when the mountaineer,
The King of Morven, if old songs be sooth,
Fingal, from Carun's bloody flashing waves
Shook the fled Roman on his new-built wall ; 40
And Ossian woke up on his hill of dreams,
And spread the glory of his song abroad,
To halo round his sceptred Hero's head.

But not the less his work of pride pursued
Th' imperial Roman ; up the pillars rose, 45
Slow lengthening out their long unbroken lines,
In delicate solidity advanc'd,
And stately grace toward the sky, till met
By the light massiveness of roof, that sloped
Down on their flowery capitals. Nor knew 50
That man of purple and of diadem,
The Universal Architect at work,
Framing for him a narrow building dark,
The grave's lone building. Th' emperor and his bones
Into the blank of things forgot and past 55
Had moulder'd, but this proud and 'during pile,
By wild weeds overgrown, by yellow hues
Of age deep tinted, still a triumph wrought

O'er time, and Christian disregard, and stood
As though to mock its Maker's perishing. 60

Upon the eastern pediment stood out
A fierce relief, where the tumultuous stone
Was nobly touch'd into a fit device

For th' immortal Homicide within : it showed
His coming on the earth ; the God had burst 65

The gates of Janus, that fell shattering back
Behind him, from the wall the rearing steeds

Sprung forth, and with their stony hoofs the air
Insulted: Them Bellona urg'd, abroad

Her snaky locks from her bare wrinkled brow 70

Went scattering ; forward th' haggard charioteer
Lean'd, following to the coursers reeking flanks

The furrowing scourge with all herself, and hung
Over their backs half fury, and half joy,

As though to listen to their bruising hoofs, 75

That trampled the thick massacre. Erect

Behind, with shield drawn in and forward spear,

The con'd helm finely shap'd to th' arching brow,

The God stood up within the car, that seem'd

To rush whenever the fleet wind swept by. 80

His brow was glory, and his arm was power,
And a smooth immortality of youth,
Like freshness from Elysium newly left,
Th' embalming of celestial airs inhal'd,
Touch'd with a beauty to be shudder'd at 85

His massy shape, a lightning-like fierce grace,
That makes itself admir'd, whilst it destroys.

There on a throne, fronting the morning sun,
Caswallon sate, his sceptre a bright sword
Unsheath'd; with savage art had he broke up 90

His helmet to the likeness of a crown,
Thereon uncouthly set and clustering bright

Rich jewels glitter'd; to his people rang'd

Upon the steps of marble sloping down,

Barbaric justice minist'ring he sate, 95

Expounding th' absolute law of his own will,

And from the abject at his feet receiv'd

Homage that seem'd like worship: not alone

From his wild people, but from lips baptiz'd,

Came titles that might make the patient Heavens 100

Burst to the utterance of a laughing scorn;

Might wake up from the bosom of the grave,

A bitter and compassionate contempt,
To hear the inheritance of her dull worms,
Nam'd in his dauntless and unblushing style, 105
“Unconqu'able ! Omnipotent ! Supreme !”

But all along the ranging column files,
And all abroad the turgid laudings spread,
“Unconqu'able ! Omnipotent ! Supreme !”—

Yet he, the Stranger, whom Prince Malwyn leads, 110
He bows not, those hymn'd flatteries seem to jar
Upon his sense, so high his head he bears
Above them, like a man constrain'd to walk
Amid low tufts of poisonous herbs ; he fronts
The monarch, and thus 'gins his taunting strain : 115
“Unconqu'able ! whose conquering is the wolf's,
That when the shifting battle rages yet,
Steals to some desert corner of the field,
And riots on the spoils. Omnipotent !
Aye, as a passive weapon, wielded now, 120
Now cast away contemptuous for the dust
To canker and to rust around. Supreme !
O'er whom is Ruin on its vulture wings,
Scoffing the bubble whereupon thou rid'st,

And waiting Hengist's call to swoop and pierce 125
And dissipate its swoln and airy pride.
Whose diadem of glory, sword of power,
Yea, breath of life, at Hengist's wayward will,
Cling to thee, ready at his beck to fade,
And shiver and expire"—" At Hengist's call ! 130
At Hengist's beck ! at Hengist's !" —the word chok'd,
With eyes that dug into the Stranger's face,
Yet so by wrath bewilder'd, they had lost
Distinction, rose Caswallon. From the wall
A lance he seiz'd, huge as a pine-tree stem, 135
That on Blencathara stands sheer 'gainst heaven's storms:
Far o'er all heads a long and rapid flight
It cut along the air, till almost fail'd
The sight to track it to its ponderous fall.
Then taking on his throne his quiet seat, 140
" Back, back to Hengist, say my lance flies thus,
Bid him o'er cast it, then come here again
To menace at Caswallon"—" Soft and weak,
(Pursued the unwondering Stranger) know'st thou not,
There is a strength, that is not of the arm, 145
Nor standeth in the muscles sinewy play ?

It striketh, but its striking is unseen,
It wieldeth, what it wieldeth seeming yet
Sway'd by its own free motion. King, I say,
Thou stepp'st not, speak'st not, but obedient still 150
To Hengist's empire, thou'rt a dog that hunts
But as thy master slips thee on his game,
A bridled steed, that vaunteth as his own
His rider's prowess."—"Hah! I know thee now,
Insolent outcast, Samor!"—"And I thee, 155
Self-outcast, once a Briton—oh thou fall'n
When most thou seem'st exalted, oh most base
When most ennobled, a most pitiful slave
When bearing thee most lordly! Briton once,
Ay, every clod of earth that makes a part 160
Of this isle's round, each leaf of every tree,
And every wave of every streamlet brook,
Should look upon thee with a mother's glance,
And speak unto thee with a mother's voice.
But thou, most impious and unnatural son, 165
Hast sold thy mother to the shame and curse
Of foreign lust, hast knit a league to rend
And sever her, most proud if some torn limb

Be cast thee for thy lot".—Then rose again
Caswallon, from his brow the crown took off, 170
And placing it in Samor's hand—" I read
Thy purpose, and there's fire in't, by my throne !
Now, Samor, place that crown upon my head,
Do me thy homage, kneeling, as thy king,
And thou and I, we'll have a glorious tilt 175
At these proud Saxons. Turn not off; may boys
Gild their young javelins in Caswallon's blood,
And women pluck me by the beard, if e'er
On other terms I league with thee."—The crown
Samor received, and Samor look'd to heaven, 180
And Samor bow'd his knee,—“ Almighty God,
If thine eternal thunderbolts are yet
Unweary of their function dire, if earth
Yet, yet have not exhausted and consum'd
Thy flame-wing'd armoury of wrath, reserve 185
Some signal and particular revenge
For this man's head, so this foul earth shall learn,
Ere doomsday, that the sin, whose monstrous shape
Doth most offend thy nice and sensitive sight,
Is to bear arms against our native land. 190

Make thou of him a monumental ruin,
To publish in the ages long remote,
That sometimes is thy red right hand uplift
Against the living guilty."—And to earth,
Upleaping, Samor dash'd the crown; the gems 195
Lay starry on the pavement white. On high
Caswallon the rear'd sword of justice swung,
Heavy with death, above th' Avenger's head.
But he—"Caswallon, hold thine hand, here, here
Thy warrant for my safety, by thy son 200
A poniard given, upon his heart to wreak
All evil done myself." With bosom bare
Stood Malwyn by the Avenger's side. But he
Viewing that downy skin, empurpled o'er
With youth's light colouring, and his constant mien, 205
Cast down the dagger, and "Fall what fall may,
Excellent boy, my hand shall still be white
From blood of thine."—Like wild-boar in his rush
Baffled, or torrent check'd, Caswallon paus'd—
"Now, Christian, where learnt thou the art to wrest 210
My vengeance from me? Go, go, I may strike
If the fit fire me.—By Andraste, boy,

Boy Malwyn, there's thy father in thy blood.
Hah, Samor, thou hast 'scap'd me now, erewhile
I'll make a footstool of thy neck, to mount 215
On Britain's throne : alive or dead, I'll have
A knee as supple, and a front as low
From thee, as any of my milk-fed slaves :
Go, go."—And Malwyn led the Avenger forth
Along the dull and sleepy shore of Ouse, 220
Till all Caer Ebranc's sounds flagg'd on his ear,
And all its towers had dwindled from his sight.
Ere parting, Malwyn clasp'd his hand, and tears
Hung in his eyelids.—“ Oh, thou know'st not yet
How Hengist sways my father's passive mind ; 225
My sister, my sweet Lilian, she whose sight
Made mine eyes tremble, whom I've stol'n to see,
Despite my father's stern command, asleep
With parted lips, and snowy breathing skin,
Scarce knew she me, her brother, her knew I 230
So only that my spirit yearn'd to mix
With her's in fondness, she, even she, the soft
The innocent, a wolf had lov'd her, she
Hath felt the drowning waters o'er her close,

Fair victim of an hellish sacrifice." 235

After a troubled silence, spake the Chief:

"Malwyn, my Christian pupil, God will give

The lov'd on earth another meeting place;

Adieu, remember, Vengeance, Vigilance."—

The Spring had made an early effort faint, 240

T' encroach upon the Winter's ancient reign;

And she had lur'd forth from the glittering earth

The snowdrop and pale cowslip, th' elder tree

And hawthorn their green buds shot out, yet fear'd

T'entrust the rude air with their dainty folds. 245

A fresh green sparkled where the snow had been,

And here and there a bird on the bare spray

Warbled a timorous welcome, and the stream

Of Eamont, as rejoicing to be free,

Went laughing down its sunny silvering course. 250

The only wint'ry thing on Eamont's shore

Is human; powerless are the airs that touch

To breathing and to kindling the dead earth,

Powerless the dewy trembling of the sun,

To melt around the heart of Vortimer 255

The snow that flakes and curdles there—that bank,

That little bank of fair and cherish'd turf,
Whereon his head reclines, ah, doth not rest !
By its round swelling, likest were a grave,
Save that 'twere brief and narrow for all else 260
But fairy, or those slender watery shapes
That dance beneath the stream. Yet there the Spring
Hath dropp'd her first, her tenderest bloom ; the airs
Find the first flowery odours on that spot ;
Cowslip is there, and primrose faint and pale, 265
The daisy and the violet's blue eyes,
Peeping from out the shaking grass. The step
Of Samor wakens the pale slumberer there,
He lifts his lean hands up, and parts away
The matting hair from o'er his eyes, which look 270
As though the painful sunlight wilder'd them,
With stony stare that saw not ; save that lay
A shepherd's wallet by his side, had seem'd
That foot of man ne'er ventur'd here ; all sounds
Were strange and foreign, save the pendant arms. 275
Swinging above with heavy knolling sound.
But Samor's presence made a sudden break
Upon his miserable flow of thought ;

He motion'd first with bony arm, then spake.
" Away, away, thou'rt fearful, thou'lt disturb, 280
Away with thy arm'd head and iron heel,
She will not venture, while thy aspect fierce
Haunts hereabout, she cannot brook a sound,
Nor anything that's rude, and dark, and harsh,
Nor any voice, nor any look but mine ; 285
She will not come up, if thou linger'st here ;
Hard and discourteous man, why seek to keep
My own, my buried from me ? why prevent
The smiling intercourse of those that love ?"—
" Sad man, what mean'st thou ?"—" Speak not, but
begone, 290
I tell thee, she's beneath, I laid her there,
And she'll come up to me, I know she will,
Trembling and slender, soft and rosy pale.
I know it, all things sound, and all things smile,
As when she wont to meet me."—" Woful youth, 295
The dead shall never rise but once."—" And why ?
The primrose that was dead; I saw it shed
Its leaves, and now again 'tis fresh and fair ;
The swallow, fled on gliding wing away,

Like a departing spirit, see, it skims 300
The waters; the white dormouse, that went down
Into its cave, hath been abroad; the stream,
That was so silent, hark! its murmuring voice
Is round about us; Lilian too, to meet
The voices and the breathing things she lov'd, 305
Amid the sunshine and the springing joy
Will rise again."—"Kind Heaven, I should have known,
Though rust embrown'd yon breast-plate, and yon helm,
I should have known, though furrowy sunk and wan,
That face, though wreck'd and broken, that tall form;
Prince Vortimer! in maiden or in child, 311
Fancies so sick and wild had been most sad,
But in a martial and renowned chief,
Might teach a trick of pity to a fiend.
Oh, much abus'd! much injur'd! well, too well 315
Hath that fell man the deed of evil wrought."—
"Man, man! then there is man, whose blood will flow,
Whose flesh will quiver under the keen steel,
Samor!"—And up he leap'd, as though he flung
Like a dead load, the dreamy madness off. 320
"Samor! thou tranquil soul! that walk'st abroad

With thy calm reason, and thy cloudless face
Unchangeable, as a cold midnight star :
Thou scarce wilt credit, I have found a joy
In hurling stones down on that glassy tide, 325
And with an angry and quick-dashing foot,
Breaking the senseless smoothness, that methought
Smiled wickedly upon me, and rejoic'd
At its own guilt, and my calamity.
But oh, upon a thing that feels and bleeds, 330
And shrieks and shudders, with avenging arm
To spring ! Where is't and who ? good Samor tell.—
And Samor told the tale, and thus—“ Brave youth,
Not only from yon narrow turf, come up
From Britain's every hill, and glen, and plain, 335
Deep voices that invoke thee, Vortimer,
To waken from thy woful rest. Thy arm
No selfish, close, and singular revenge
Must nerve and freshen ; in thy country's cause,
Not in thy own, that fury must be wreak'd.” 340

His answer was the brandishing his sword,
Which he had rent down from th' o'erhanging bough,
And the infuriate riot of his eye.

“ Oh, perilous your hazard,” still went on
Samor, “ ye foes of freedom, ye take off 345
Heaven’s bonds from all our fiercer part of man,
Ye legalize forbidden thoughts, the thirst
Of blood ye make a glory, give the hue
Of honour and self-admiration proud,
To passions murky, dark, unreconcil’d: 350
The stern and Pagan vengeance sanctify
T’ a Christian virtue, and our prayers, that mount
Unto the throne of God, though harshly toned
With imprecations, take their flight uncheck’d.”

But Vortimer upon the grassy bank 355
Had fall’n, “ Not long, sweet spirit, oh not long,
Shall violets be wanting on thy grave.”—

Yet unaccompanied the Avenger past,—
As though the wonted dark and solemn words,
“ Vengeance and Vigilance,” had fix’d him there, 360
Prince Vortimer remains by Eamont side.

Samor ! the cities hear thy lonely voice,
Thy lonely tread is in the quiet vale,
Thy lonely arm, amid his deep trench’d camp,
The Saxon hears upon some crashing helm 365

Breaking in thunder and in death. But thee,
Why see I thee by Severn side? what soft
And indolent attraction wiles thee on,
Even on this cold and gusty April day,
To the sad desert of thy ancient home? 370
Why mingle for thyself the wormwood cup?
Why plunge into the fount of bitterness?
Or why, with sad indulgence, pamper up,
Wilful the moody sorrow, and relax
Thy high-strung spirit? Oh, so near, no power 375
Hath he to pass from those old scenes away,
He must go visit every spot below'd,
And think on joys, no more to be enjoy'd.

Ruin is there, but ruin slow and mild,
The spider's wandering web is thin and gray 380
On roof and wall, here clings the dusky bat,
And, where his infants voices us'd to sound,
The owlet's sullen flutter and dull chirp
Come o'er him; on his hospitable hearth
The blind worm and slow beetle crawl their round. 385
Yet is no little, light, and trivial thing,
Without its tender memory; first with kiss,

Long and apparent sweet, the primrose bed
He visits, where that graceful girl is laid.
Then roves he every chamber; eye, and ear, 390
And soul, all full of her, that is not there :
Emeric haunts everywhere, there's not a door
Her thin form hath not glided through, no stone
Upon the chequer'd marble where her foot
Hath never glanc'd, no window whence her eyes 395
Have never gaz'd for him ; the walls have heard
Her voice ; her touch, now deathly cold, hath been
Warm on so many things ; there hangs, even now,
The lute, from whence those harmonies she drew,
So spherelike sweet, they seem'd to drop from heaven.
There, where the fox came starting out but now, 401
There, circled with her infants, did she sit :
And here the bridal couch, the couch of love,
A little while, and then the bed of death.
And lo that holy scroll of parchment, stamp'd 405
With many a sentence of the word of God,
Still open, Samor could not choose but read
In large and brilliant characters emblaz'd,
The Preacher's " Vanity of vanities."

How like is grief to pleasure ! here to stay 410
One day, one night, to see the eve sink down
Into the water, with its wonted fall,
'Tis strange temptation—and to gather up
Sad relics. And the visionary night !
How will its airy forms come sliding down, 415
Here, where is old familiar footing all,
'Tis strange temptation.—But the White-horse flag
Past waving o'er his sight, at once he thought
Of that seal'd day of destiny, when his foot
Should trample on his neck, and burst away. 420

Oh secret traveller o'er a ruin'd land,
Yet once more must I seek thee 'mid the drear,
The desolate, the dead. On Ambri plain,
On Murder's blasted place of pride. Might seem
At distance 'twas a favour'd meadow, bright 425
With richer herbage than the moorland brown
Around it, the luxurious weeds look'd boon,
And glanc'd their many-colours fleck'd with dew.
Seen nearer, scatter'd all around appear'd
Few relics of that sumptuous feast, the wrecks 430
Of lifeless things, that gaily glitter'd still,

While all the living had been dark so long.
Fragments of banners, and pavilion shreds,
Or broken goblet here and there, or ring,
Or collar on that day how proudly worn ! 435

A stol'n and hurried burying had there been ;
Here had the pious workman, as disturb'd
At his imperfect toil, left struggling out
A hand, whose bleach'd bones seem'd even yet to grasp
The earth, so early, so untimely left. 440

And here the gray flix of the wolf, here black
Lay feathers of the obscene raven's wing,
Shewing, where they had marr'd the fruitless toil.
And uncouth stones bore here and there a name,
Haply the vaunted heritage of kings. 445

It was a sad and stricken place ; though day
Was in the heaven, and the fresh grass look'd green,
The light was wither'd, nor was silence there
A soothing quiet ; busy 'twas, and chill
And piercing, rather absence of strong sound, 450
Than stillness, like the shivering interval
Between the pauses of a passing bell.

Oh Britain ! what a narrow place confines

Thy powerful and thy princely ! that gray earth
Was what adorn'd and made thee proud : the fair, 455
Whose beauty was the rapture of thy maids,
The treasure of thy mothers : and the brave,
Whose constant valour was thy wall of strength :
The wealthy, whose air-gilding palace towers
Made thee a realm of glory to detain 460
The noon-day sun in his career ; thy wise,
Whose grave and solemn argument controll'd
Thy councils, and thy mighty, whose command
Was law in thy strong cities, Beauty, wealth,
Might, valour, wisdom, mingled and absorb'd 465
In one cold similarity of dust,
One layer of white and silent ashes all.
The air breathes of mortality ; abroad
A spirit seems to hover, pouring in
Dim thoughts of Doomsday to the soul ; steal up 470
Voiceless sensations of eternity,
From the blank earth. Oh, is it there beneath
Th' invisible everlasting ? or dispers'd
Among its immaterial kindred free,
The elements ? Oh man ! man ! fit compeer 475

Of worms and angels, trodden under foot,
Yet boundless by the infinite expanse
Of ether ! mouldering and immutable !

But thou, Avenger, in that quiet glebe,
How many things are hid, once link'd to thee 480

By ties more gentle than the coupling silk,
That pairs two snowy doves ! hands used to meet

In brotherly embrace with thine, and hearts

Wherein thy image dwelt, clear, changeless, full

As the Spring moon upon a crystal lake, 485

Faces in feast, in council, and in fight,

That took their colouring from thine. And thou

Alone art breathing, moving, speaking here,

Amid the cold, the motionless, the mute !

Among that solemn multitude of graves 490

One woman hath her dwelling : round and round

She wanders with a foot that seems to fear

That it is treading over one belov'd.

She seems to seek what she despairs to find.

There's in her eye a wild enquiring roll, 495

Yet th' eye is stony. Oft she stops to hear,

Then, as in bitter disappointment, shakes

Her loose hair, and again goes wandering on.
She shriek'd at Samor's presence, and flung up
Her arms, and in her shriek was laughter. "Thou!
What dost thou with that face above the earth, 501
'Thou should'st be with the rest!"—"My friend's soft bride,
The dainty Evelene!"—"That's it, the name
Wherewith the winds have mock'd me every morn,
And every dusky eve—or was it then? 505
Aye then it was, when I was wont to sleep
On a soft bed, and when no rough winds blew
About me, when I ever saw myself
Drest glitt'ringly, and there was something else
Then, which there is not now."—"Thy Elidure, 510
Ah! houseless widow!"—"Hah! thou cunning man,
'Twas that, 'twas that, and thou canst tell me too
Where they have laid him—well thou canst, I know
There's deep connexion 'twixt my grief and thee.
Thou, thou art he that wakest sleepers up, 515
And send'st them forth along the cold bare heath,
To seek the dark and disappearing. There
Sound howlings at the midnight bleak, and blasts
Shivering and fierce. And there come peasant boors

That bring the mourner bread, and weave the roof 520

Above her, of the brown and rustling fern,

But never sounds the voice, or comes the shape

She sought for. Oh, my wakings and my sleeps

How exquisite they were, upon his breast

I slept, and when I woke there smil'd his face." 525

Even as the female pigeon to her nest,

All ruffled by rude winds and discompos'd,

Returning, with full breast sits brooding down,

And all sinks smooth around her and beneath:

So when the image of departed joy 530

Revisited the heart of that sad wife,

Settled to peace its wayward and distraught,

Sweetly she spake, and unconfus'dly heard,

Of him the low, the undistinguish'd laid,

Of Samor's friend, her bridegroom, Elidure. 535

And somewhat of her pale and tender bloom

With a faint flourishing enliven'd up

The wither'd and the sunken in her cheek;

But when again alone, o'er heart and brain

Flash'd back the wandering, recommenc'd the search

Ever with broken questionings, and mute 540

Lip-parted listenings, pauses at each grave,
As though it were her right, where lay her lord,
That some inherent consciousness should start
Within her; though 'tis nature's law, that one 545
Cold undistinguished silence palls the dead,
Yet, yet 'tis hard and cruel not to grant
One low sound, even the likeness of a sound,
To tell her where to lay her down and die.
Sure there are spirits round her, yet all leagued 550
'T' abuse and lead astray, and his, even his,
Pitiless as the rest, with jealous care
Concealing its felt presence. Ghostly night
Wafts her no dusk intelligence; the day
Shews nothing with its broad and glaring rays. 555

BOOK X.

BUT thou from North to South hast rang'd the isle,
From Skiddaw to the Cornwall sea-beat rocks,
One icy face of desolation cold,
One level sheet of sorrow and dismay,
Avenger! thou hast travers'd, hast but held 5
Companionship with mourners and with slaves.

Upon the northern rocks of Cornwall meet
Th' Avenger and the Warrior; thus spake he—
“How name ye yon strong castle on the rock?”
“Tintagel, the Prince Gorlois' towers.”—“And whose
Yon soldiers cresting with their camp the shore, 11
And yon embattled navy on the sea,
Rounding their moony circle?”—“Mine.”—“And thou?”
“Methinks, most solemn questioner, the helm

Might well proclaim Pendragon."—"No, the brow, 15
Whereon that scaly blazon us'd to glow,
Had ne'er been girding with unnatural siege
A British castle, while all Britain lay
In chains beneath the Stranger."—"What art thou,
That bearest in thy high and taunting vein 20
The Princes of the land?"—"A Prince."—"Thus arm'd
And thus attir'd!"—"Misjudging, must thou learn
The actions are the raiment of the man,
Better to serve my country in worn weeds
And dinted arms like mine, than 'gainst her sons 25
To lace a golden panoply. This rust,
'Tis Saxon blood, for thine, its only praise
Is its bright stainlessness. Look not, fierce Prince,
As from my veins its earliest spots should fall,
'Tis Britain bars the arrows that I speak, 30
And makes thy heart its mark."—"What man or more
Thus fires and freezes, angers and controls
With the majestic valour of his tongue,
The never yet controll'd, and bears the name
Of Britain, like a shield before him, broad 35
And firm against my ripe and bursting wrath?"

Samor ! come, honour'd warrior, to my arms ;
Oh shame to see, and seeing not to know
The noblest of our isle."—" No arms may fold
Samor within them, but a Briton's ; thou 40
By this apostate war disown'st the name,
And leaguest dark alliance with her foes."

" Ah, then thou know'st not, in yon rock is mew'd
The crafty kite that hath my dove in thrall.
My dove, my bride, my sweet Igeria ; her 45
That Gorlois with his privy talon swoop'd,
The gentle, the defenceless, and looks down
From his air-swinging eyrie on my wrath,
That like the sea against that rooted rock,
Lashes and roars in vain."—" Thy bride !"—" My bride,
By holy words in saintly chapel spoke ; 51
And all before the twilight meetings stolen,
Upon the shelly beach, when came my bark
Sliding with smooth oar through the soundless spray
From the Armoric shore, and vows so fond 55
The unfelt waters crept up round our feet ;
All after rapturous union undisturb'd,
Her father's blessing on our bridal couch,
Promise of infant pledges, all o'erthrown,

All wither'd by that Gorlois, that low worm 60
I were too proud to tread on heretofore ;
He with some cold and antiquated plea
Of broken compact by the sire, away
Reft with a villain stealth th' ill-guarded gem,
And hoards it in his lone and trackless cave." 65

" A darker and more precious theft has been :
This Britain hath been stolen, this fair isle,
This land of free-born Christian men become
The rapine of fierce Heathens. Uther, hear,
Hear, son of Constantine ! most dear the ties 70
Of wedlock earthly woven, yet seal'd by God ;
But those that link us to our native land
Are wrought out from th' eternal adamant
By the Almighty. Oh thy country's call
Loud with a thousand voices drowns the tone 75
Of sweet-complaining even from wife belov'd—
Forego the weaker, Uther, and obey
The stronger duty."—" Bloodless man and cold,
Or wrong I thee ; perchance the Saxon holds
Thy Emeric, and my claims must cede to thine, 80
Even as all beauties to that peerless star."—

" Spare, Uther, spare thy taunting, she is safe,

Briton or Saxon harm not her."—" 'Tis well,
Fair tidings ! but thy shuddering brow looks white."
" There's a cold safety, Uther, with the dead, 85
There is where foes disturb no more, the grave."
" Pardon me, friend—oh pardon—but my wife,
She too will seek that undisturbed place,
Ere yield to that pale craven's love ; if false
She dare not live, and yet, oh yet she lives." 90

Uprose the Avenger, and his way he took
To where the rock broke off abrupt and sheer.
Before him yawn'd the chasm, whose depth of gloom
Sever'd the island Castle from the shore :
The ocean waves, as though but newly rent 95
That narrow channel, tumbled to and fro,
Rush'd and recoil'd, and sullenly sent up
An everlasting roar, deep echoed out
From th' underworking caverns ; the white gulls
Were wandering in the dusk abyss, and shone 100
Faint sunlight here and there on the moist slate.
The Castle drawbridge hung aloof, arm'd men
Pac'd the stern ramparts, javelins look'd out
From embrasure and loop-hole, arbalist

And bowstring loaded lay with weight of shaft 105
Menacing. On the dizzy brink stood up
Th' Avenger, like a Seraph when absolv'd
His earthly mission, on some sunny peak
He waits the gathering cloud, whereon he wont
To charioteer along the azure space ; 110
In vain he waits not, under his plum'd feet,
And round about his spreading wings it floats,
And sails off proudly with its heavenly freight.
Even thus at Samor's call down heavy fell
The drawbridge, o'er the abyss th' Avenger springs ; 115
Tintagel's huge portcullis groaning up
Its grooves gives way ; then up the jealous bridge
Behind him leaps, the gate falls clashing down.

Half wonder, and half fear, Pendragon shook
The terrors of his crest, and gasping stood, 120
As when a hunter is gone in to brave
The bear within his shaggy den, down peers
His fellow through the dusk, and fears to see
What his keen eyes strain after. But elate
Appear'd upon the rampart that tall Chief, 125
Seeming on th' outpour'd garrison to cast

Words potent as the fabled wizard's oils,
With the terrific smoothness of their fire
Wide sheeting the hush'd ocean; th' arbalist
Discharg'd its unaim'd bolt, the arrow fell 130
From the slack bowstring; careless of his charge,
The watchman from his turret lean'd, o'er all
Bright'ning and stilling the high language spread,
Giving a cast of pride to vulgar brows,
Shedding o'er stupor and thick-breathing awe 135
A solemn hue of glory: Far it spread
Beyond the sphere of sound, th' indignant brow,
The stately waving of the arm discours'd,
Flow'd argument from every comely limb,
And the whole man was eloquence. From cliff, 140
From bark gaz'd Uther's soldiery, one voice
Held in suspense the wild and busy war,
And on the motion of his lips, the fate
Of two strong armies hung. Anon the gate
Flew up, the bridge lay shuddering o'er the chasm. 145
Forth Samor comes, a Lady by his side,
And Gorlois in the garb of peace behind.
Tremblingly she came gliding on, and smooth,

As the west wind o'er beds of flowers, a child
Was with her: the cool freshness of the air 150
Seem'd o'er her marble cheek a flush unus'd
To breathe, and human faces o'er her threw
A modest, faint disturbance. Uther rush'd
To meet her, ere he came her failing frame
Seem'd as it sought some breast to sink upon, 155
Though feebly resolute, that none but his
Should be the chosen resting place. But he
Severe withheld her.—“Can the snowdrop bloom
Untainted on the hemlock bank, near thee,
Igerna, long hath trail'd a venomous plant, 160
Hast thou the sullyng influence scap'd?”—She strove
To work displeasure to her brow, the joy,
The fondness would not give it place: she held
Her boy on high, she pointed from the lines
Of his soft face to Uther's, with appeal 165
Half rapture, half reproach, and cast herself
With timid boldness on her rightful couch,
Her husband's bosom, that receiv'd her in,
Even as the opening clouds an angel home
Returning. But the joyous boy relax'd 170

His features to a beautiful delight ;
To the fierce Dragon on his father's helm
Lifting his sportive hand, and smoothing down
The horrent scales, and looking with glad eye
Into the fiery hollow of his jaws. 175

Mute lay the armies, the pale Gorlois wrought
His features to a politic joy, alone
Stood Samor and aloof, he stood in tears.
Samor, amid the plain of buried men
Tearless, and in his own deserted home, 180

In tears unveil'd before th' assembled camp ;
It was so like a meeting after death,
That union of the husband and the wife,
So ghostly, so unearthly. Thus shall meet
The disembodied, Emeric and himself, 185

Not with rude rocks their footing, the cold airs
And cloudy sunshine of this world around.
But all of life must intervene, and all
The long dark grave mysterious ; yet even here
It was a sweet impossibility, 190

Wherewith at times his soul mad dalliance held,
An earthly, bodily, sensible caress,

Even long and rapturous, as that hanging now
On Uther's neck from soft Igerna's arms.

Upon the silence burst a voice, that cried
" Arthur," whereat the child his sport broke off
With that embossed serpent, and stretch'd out
His arms, where, on the fragment of a rock,
Stood Merlin. " Arthur, hail ! hail, fatal Boy,
Bright arrow from the bow of Destiny,
Go forth upon thy fiery course ! the steeds
Are in the meadows, that shall bear thee forth,
Thee and thy barded chivalry ! the spears
Are forg'd wherewith in tourney and in fight
Ye shall o'erbear the vaunting Saxon ! shields
Are stamping with your bright devices bold ;
And Bards are leaning on their high-strung harps,
Awaiting thee, to flower out in their boon
And ripe fertility of song. Go forth,
Strong reaper in the harvest of renown,
Arthur ! the everlasting Lord of Fate
Hath summon'd thee to thy immortal race !"

The infant clapp'd his hands, Pendragon flung
Aloft his scaly bickering crest, her child

Igern folded to her heart, and wept. 215

And forward leap'd the Avenger to salute

Snowdon's dark Prophet, Merlin was not there.

Good fortune on good fortune followeth fast ;

Tidings come rapid of a Breton fleet

Seen on the southern shore ; the Chiefs are past 220

To where th' Archangel's Mount o'erlooks the sea.

Oh go not to thy couch, thou bright hair'd Sun !

'Though Ocean spread its welcoming breast, yet pause

'Mid that ethereal architecture wrought

Around thee by thine own creative light. 225

How broad the over-vaulting palace arch

Spreads up the heavens with amethyst ciel'd, and hung

With an enwoven tapestry of flame,

Wav'd over by long banner and emblaz'd,

Like hall of old barbaric Potentate, 230

With scutcheon and with shield, that now unfold,

Now in their cloudy texture shift; and paved

With watery mosaic rich, the waves

Quick glancing, like a floating surface, laid

With porphyry and crystal interwrought. 345

There's yet a sight, oh Sun ! to check awhile

Thy setting ; lo, the failing breezes lift
The white wings of that fair Armoric fleet
To catch the level lines of light ; the oars
Flash up the spray, that purples as it falls : 240
While wearing one by one, their armed freight
They cast out on the surfy beach. The Kings,
King Emrys and Armoric Hoel meet
Pendragon, Samor, and their band of chiefs.

There meet they on the land's extremest verge 245
To conquer, to deliver, few, but strong,
Strong in the sinews of the soul ; as rose
The giant wrestler from his mother's breast,
Earth-born Anteus, his huge limbs refresh'd
For the Herculean combat, so shall ye, 250
Kings, Chiefs, and Warriors, from your native soil
Draw to the immortal faculties of mind
A springtide everlasting and unchang'd.
The armour of a holy cause outshines
The iron or the knosped brass, and hopes 255
And memories to the home-returning brave
Crowding from every speck of sacred earth,
Outlead the trumpet's wakening blast, till leaps

Vengeance to Glory's vanguard post, and leads

The onset, and looks proudly down to see 260

The red blood deepening round her laving feet.

Alas, that in your harvest of high thoughts,

Thick set with golden promise of renown,

The poppy seeds of envy and distrust

Should take their baleful root. Slow winds along 265

Gorlois, the sower of that noxious crop,

Scattering it in with careless toil ; now stands

By royal Emrys' side, now mines beneath

Pendragon's towery soul, now sadly warns

With cautious words and dark speech broken off, 270

Hoel, the crown'd Armorican ; his looks

Belying his feign'd confidence of speech,

But half surmising fear, and killing hope

By his cold care of keeping it alive.

“ Not that I love not, whom all love, admire 275

On whom the admiration of all hearts

Falls with such free profusion, 'tis no shame

For us mean lamps before great Samor's light

To wane and glimmer in our faint eclipse.

Yet whence this fettering of all eyes and hearts ? 280

This stern unsocial solitude of fame?
 True, from that fatal banquet 'scap'd he, true
 Undaunted hath he rov'd the isle, nor doubt
 For some high purpose, that 'twere rash for us
 To search out with our dim and misty sight; 285
 Nor think, King Emrys, I thy crown assert
 Unstably set upon thy royal brow,
 But there's a dazzling in its jewel'd round
 Might tempt a less self-mastering grasp. Who holds
 The souls of men in thralldom with his tongue, 290
 Makes bridges grow before him, stony walls
 Break up to give him way,—I speak not now
 In vengeance of Tintagel, 'twas a deed
 Most worth my richest praise, that made me friend
 To brave Pendragon. But ambition wreck'd 295
 The angels, and the climbing soul of man
 Hath sinn'd for meaner gain than Britain's throne."—

So one by one he wound his serpent coil
 Around the Chieftains souls; and inly breath'd
 The creeping venom. But Pendragon's heart, 300
 Too fiery or too noble to suspect,
 In Samor's teeth flung fierce th' oppressive doubt:

Th' Avenger's tranquil smile was like the change
Of aspect in a green and lofty tree,
Touch'd by the wings of some faint breeze, nor shakes 305
The massy foliage, nor is quite at rest,
While languidly the undisturbing air
Falls away and expires. "Will Emrys hold

At midnight on St. Michael's Mount, his pomp
Of coronation? Samor will be there." 310

"At midnight!"—"Aye, the fires will gaily blaze,
The silent air is meet for solemn oaths."—

The night is starless, soft and still, the heavens
O'erwoven with a thin and rayless mist;

A long low heavy sound of breaking surge 315

Roams down the shore, and now and then the woods
Flutter and bend with one short rush of wind.

The tide hath risen o'er the stony belt,
That to the mainland links the Mount, where meet

Even now the Chieftains, ocean all around, 320

On every side the white and moaning waves.

On the bare summit, 'neath the cope of heaven,

The conclave stands, bare, save a lofty pile

Of wood compacted like funereal pyre

Of a departed hero in old time 325
On some Ægean promontory rear'd,
Or by the Black Inhospitable Sea.

The crown is on king Emrys' head, his hair
Is redolent with the anointing oil.

"Hail, King of Britain!"—Samor cried, and "Hail!"
Replied that band of heroes; Hail! the shores 330
Echoed, from bark and tent came pealing up
The universal Hail, the ocean waves
Broke in with their hoarse murmur of applause.

"Air, earth, and waters, ye have play'd your part, 335
There's yet another element,"—cried aloud
Samor, and in the pyre he cast a brand.
A moment, and uprush'd the giant fire,
Piercing the dim heavens with its blazing brow,
And on the still air shaking its red locks. 340
There by its side the Vassals and their King,
Motionless on their shadows huge and dun,
Show'd like destroying Angels, round enwrap'd
In their careering pomp of flame; far flash'd
The yellow midnight day o'er shore and sea: 345
The waves now ruddy heav'd, now darkly plung'd,

Upon the rocks, within the wavering light
 Strong featur'd faces fierce, and hard-lin'd forms
 Broke out and disappear'd ; the anchor'd fleet
 Were laving their brown sides in rainbow spray. 350
 No sound was heard, but the devouring flame,
 And the thick plashing waters.—“ Keep your faith,
 (Cried Samor) ye eternal hills, and ye
 Heaven-neighbouring mountains !”—Eastward far anon
 Another fire rose furious up, behind 355
 Another and another : all the hills
 Each behind each held up its crest of flame ;
 Along the heavens the bright and crimson hue
 Widening and deepening travels on, the range
 O'erleaps black Tamar, by whose ebon tide 360
 Cornwall is bounded, and on Heytor rock,
 Above the stony moorish source of Dart,
 It waves a sanguine standard ; Haldon burns,
 And the Red City* glows a deeper hue ;
 And all the southern rocks, the moorland downs 365
 In those portentous characters of flame
 Discourse, and bear the glaring legend on,

* Caer ruth, Exeter.

Even to the graves on Ambri plain, where woke
That pallid woman, and rejoic'd, and deem'd
'Twas sent to guide her to the tomb she sought. 370
Fast flash they up, those altars of revenge,
As the snake-tressed Sister torch-bearers,
Th' Eumenides, from the Tartarian depths
Were leaping on from hill to hill, on each
Leaving the tracks of their flame-dropping feet. 375
Or as the souls of the dead fathers, wrapt
In bright meteorous grave-clothes, had arisen,
And each sate crowning his accustom'd hill,
Silent and radiant: or as th' isle devote
Had wrought down by her bold and frequent guilt 380
Th' Almighty's lightning shafts, now numberless
Forth raining from the lurid reeking clouds,
And smiting all the heights. On spreads the train,
Northward it breaks upon the Quantock ridge,
It reddens on the Mendip forests dark, 385
It looks into the cavern'd Cheddar cliffs,
The boatman on the Severn mouth awakes
And sees the waters rippling round his keel
In spots and streaks of purple light, each shore

Ablaze with all its answering hills ; the streams 390

Run glittering down Plinlimmon's side, though thick

And moonless the wan night : and Idris stands

Like Stromboli or Ætna, where 'twas feign'd

E'er at their flashing furnace wrought the Sons

Of Vulcan, forging with eternal toil 395

Jove's never idle thunderbolts. And thou,

Snowdon, the king of mountains, art not dark

Amid thy vassal brethren gleaming bright.

Is it to welcome thy returning Seer,

That thus above thy clouds, above thy snows 400

Thou wear'st that wreathed diadem of fire,

As to outshine the pale and winking stars ?

O'er Menai's waters blue the gleaming spreads,

The Bard in Mona's secret grove beholds

A glitter on his harp-strings, and looks out 405

Upon the kindling cliffs of Penmaimawr.

Is it a pile of martyrdom above

Clwyd's green vale ? beside the embers bright

Stands holy Germain, as a Saint new come

From the pure mansions of beatitude, 410

The centre of a glory, that spreads round

Its film of thin pellucid gold. Nor there
Pauses the restless Messenger, still on
Vaults it from rock to rock, from peak to peak.
Far seen it shimmer'd on Caer-Ebranc wall, 415
And Malwyn blew a bugle blast for joy.
The sun uprising sees the dusk night fled
Already from tall Pendle, and the height
Of Ingleborough, sees Helvellyn cast
A meteor splendour on the mountain lakes, 420
Like mirrors of the liquid molten brass.
The brightest and the broadest and the last,
There flakes the beacon glare, and in the midst
Dashing the ruddy sparkles to and fro
With the black remnant of a pine-tree stem, 425
Stands arm'd from head to foot Prince Vortimer.

BOOK XI.

MIGHTY in thy endurance, in revenge
Mightier ! thou shak'st thy dusky patience off,
Oh Britain ! as a snake its wither'd skin,
That boastful to the sunshine coils and spreads
In bright and cruel beauty. Not in vain 5
Have those wild beacons rear'd their fires, thou wak'st,
The slumber falls from thee, as dewdrops shed
From the morn-kindling falcon's wing. On hill,
In vale, in forest and in moor, in field
And city, like the free and common air, 10
Like the wide-spreading golden hue of dawn,
Ranges the boundless passion uncontroll'd.
The " Vigilance," hath drop'd absorb'd away
From the fierce war-cry, one portending word

"Vengeance," rides lonely upon all the winds. 15

Alas, delicious Spring! God sends thee down
To breathe upon his cold and perish'd works
Beauteous revival; earth should welcome thee,
Thee and the West wind, thy smooth paramour,
With the soft laughter of her flowery meads, 20
Her joys, her melodies. The prancing stag
Flutters the shivering fern, the steed shakes out
His mane, the dewy herbage silver-webb'd
With frank step trampling; the wild goat looks down
From his empurpling bed of heath, where break 25
The waters deep and blue with crystal gleams
Of their quick leaping people: the fresh lark
Is in the morning sky, the nightingale
Tunes evesong to the dropping waterfall.
Creation lives with loveliness, all melts 30
And trembles into one mild harmony.
Man, only harsh and inharmonious Man,
Strews for thy delicate feet the battle field,
Makes all thy smooth and flowing airs to jar
With his hoarse trumpetings, scares thy sweet light 35
With gleams of violent and angry brass.

Away ! it is a yearly common joy,
A rapture that ne'er fails the solemn Sun
In his eternal round, the blossoming
And fragrance of the green resolving earth. 40
But a fresh springtide in the human soul,
A nation from its wintry trance set loose,
The bursting ice of servitude, the bloom
Of freedom in the wither'd mind obscure,
The bleakness of the heart discomfited, 45
And over the bow'd shape and darkling brow
The flowering out of faded glories, sounds
Of cheering and of comfort to the rent
And broken by the tyrannous northern blast,
These are earth's rich adornings, these the choice 50
Of nature's bounteous, and inspiring shows.
Therefore the young Sun with his prime of light
Shall beam on ensigns ; the blithe airs shall waft
Jocund the lofty pealing battle words ;
And not unwelcome, fierce crests intercept 55
The spring-dews from the thirsty soil ; the brass
For vestment the admiring earth shall wear
More proud than all her flowery robe of green.

In all the isle was flat subjection tame,
 In all the isle, hath Freedom rear'd her, plum'd 60
 With terror, sandal'd with relentlessness :
 Her march like brazen chariots, or the tramp
 Of horsemen in a rocky glen ; and clouds
 Of javelins in her front, and in her rear
 Dead men in grisly heaps, dead Saxons strewn 65
 Upon their trampled White Horse banners : them
 Her fury hath no time to scorn, no pause
 To look back on her deathful deeds atchiev'd,
 While aught remains before her to atchieve.
 Distract amid the wide spread feast of blood, 70
 The wandering raven knows not where to feed,
 And the gorg'd vulture droops his wing and sleeps.

War hath the garb of holiness, bear proof,
 Thou vale of Clwyd, to our cold late days,
 By the embalming of tradition named, 75
 Maes Garmon, of that saintly Bishop. He
 His gray thin locks unshaken, his slow port
 Calm as he trod a chapel's rush-strewn floor,
 Comes foremost of his Christian mountaineers,
 Against th' embattled Pagans fierce array. 80

By the green margin of the stream, the band
Of Arngrim glitter in the morning light.
Their shadowy lances line the marble stream
With long and level rules of trembling shade ;
The sunshine falling in between in streaks 85
Of brightness. They th' unwonted shew of war
Behold slow winding down the wooded hill.

“ Now by our Gods,” cried Arngrim, “ discontent
To scare our midnight with their insolent fires,
They break upon our calm and peaceful day.” 90
But silent as the travel of the clouds
At breathless twilight, or a flock that winds,
Dappling the brown cliff with its snowy specks,
Foldward along the evening dews, a bell
Now and then tinkling, faintly shrill, come on 95
Outspreading on the meadow the stern band
Of Britons with their mitred Captain ; front
Oppos'd to front they stand, and spear to spear.
Then Germain clasp'd his hands and look'd to heaven,
Then Germain in a deep and solemn tone 100
Cried “ Alleluia !” answer was flung back :
From cliff and cavern, “ Alleluia,” burst ;

It seem'd strong voices broke the bosom'd earth,
Dropt voices from the clouds, and in the rush
Of waters was an human clamour,* far 105
Swept over all things in its boundless range
The scattering and discomfiting appeal ;
'Twas shaken from the shivering forest leaves,
Ceaseless and countless, lifeless living things 110
Multiplied " Alleluia," all the air
Was that one word, all sounds became that sound,
As the broad lightning swallows up all lights,
All quench'd in one blue universal glare.

On rush'd the Britons, but 'gainst flying foes, 115
Quick smote the Britons, but no breast plate clove
Before them, then the ignominious death
First through the back found way to Saxon hearts.

Oh, Suevian forests ! Clwyd's vale heholds
What ye have never witnessed, Arngrim's flight— 120
Fleet huntsman, thou art now the deer, the herd,
Whereof thou wert the prime and lofty horn'd,
Are falling fast around thee, th' unleash'd dogs
Of havock on their reeking flanks, and thee,

* Holinshed, Book 5, Chap. 6.

The herdsman of the meek and peaceful goats, 125
Thee, the soft tuner of the reedy flute
Beside Nantfrangon's stony cataract,
Mordrin pursues. So strong that battle word,
Its holy transmutation and austere
Works in the soul of man, the spirit sheathes 130
In the thrice folding brass of valour, swells
The thin and lazy blood t' a current fierce
And torrent like, and in the breast erewhile
But open to the tremulous melting airs
Of passions gentle and affections smooth, 135
Plants armed hopes and eagle-wing'd desires.
Therefore that youth his downy hand hath wreath'd
In the strong Suevian's knotted locks, drawn up
Like a wrought helm of ebon; therefore fix
His eyes, more us'd to swim in languid light, 140
With an implacable and constant stare
Down on the face of Arngrim, backward drawn,
As he its withering agony enjoy'd;
And therefore he whose wont it was to bear
The many sparkling crystal, or the cup 145
Of dripping water lily from the spring

To the blithe maiden of his love, now shakes
A gory and dissever'd head aloft,
And bounds in wild ovation down the vale.

But in that dire and beacon haunted night 150
King Vortigern his wonted seat had ta'en
Upon Caermerdhyn's topmost palace tower.
There, the best privilege of greatness fall'n,
He saw not, nor was seen : there wrapt in gloom,
'Twas his soul's treasur'd luxury and choice joy 155
To frame out of himself and his drear state,
Dark comfortable likenesses, and full
And frequent throng'd they this wild midnight. All
Cloudy and indistinct lay round ; the sole
Dull glimmering like to light was what remain'd 160
Of day, just not so utterly extinct
And quench'd, as yet to shew splendour had been,
And was not ; that dusk simile of himself
Delighted, royal once, now with a mock
And mimic of his lustre haunted. Why, 165
Why should not human glory wane, since clouds
Put out the immortal planets in the sky ?
Why should not crowns have seasons, since the moon

Hath but her hour to queen it in the heavens ?
Why should not high and climbing souls be lost 170
In the benighting shroud of the world's gloom ?
Lo, one inglorious, undistinguish'd night
Gathers the ancient mountains in its train,
While e'er the dunnest and most turbulent clouds
Thicken upon the stateliest ; but beneath 175
The lowly and contented waters lie
Asleep upon their weedy banks, yet they
Have all the faint blue brightness that remains.
Then moodier the fantastic humour grown,
Stoop'd upon mean and trivial things, them too 180
Wrought to his wayward misanthropic scope.
Amid the swaying, and disturbed air
The rooks hung murmuring on the oak-tree tops,
As plaining their uneasy loftiness.
While, solitary as himself, the owl 185
Sate calling on its deaf and wandering mate.
Him at that sound seiz'd merriment, that made
The lip drop, the brow writhe, " Howl on," he cried,
" Howl for thy dusky paramour,"—and turn'd
To where Rowena's chamber casements stood, 190
Void, silent, dark of their once-brilliant lights.

Sudden around 'gan spire the mountain tops
Each with its intertwisted sheaf of flame,
South, North, and East and West, fire everywhere,
Everywhere flashing and tumultuous light. 195
Then gaz'd the unking'd, then cried out the fallen,
" Now, by my soul, when comets gaze on kings
Even from the far and vaulting heavens, 'tis faith
There's hollowness beneath their tottering thrones ;
But when they flash upon our earth, and stare 200
Close in our faces, 'tis ripe time and full
For palaces to quake and royal tombs
To ope their wide and all-receiving jaws.
What is't to me? ye menace at the Great !
Ye stoop not to be dangerous and dread, 205
Oh haughty and mysterious lights ! to thrones
Low and despis'd like mine ; in earlier days
Vortigern would have quail'd, he mocks you now.
Ye are not of the heavens, I know, I see,
Discomfited of darkness, Conquerors 210
Of midnight, ye are of the earth. Why stands
Caermerdhyn and the realm of Dyfed black
Amid this restless multitude of flame ?
'Tis not for idle or for fruitless show

That with such splendid violation Man 215
Infringeth on stern nature's laws, and rends
From night her consecrate and ancient pall ;
Samor, thy hand is there ! and Vortigern
Hath not yet learnt the patience cold and tame
To be outblaz'd and stifled thus."—Down past 220
The Monarch from his seat ; few minutes fled,
And lo, within that Palace all look'd red,
And hurried with a deep confusing glare :
And over it a vaulting dome of smoke
Surging arose and vast, till roaring out 225
Columns of mounting fire sprung up, and all
Whelm'd in one broad envelopment of flame,
Stood ; as when in heroic Pagan song
Apollo to his Clarian temple came ;
At once the present Godhead kindled all 230
Th' elaborate architecture, glory-wreath'd
The pillars rose, the sculptur'd architrave
Swam in the liquid gold, the Worshipper
Within the vestibule of marble pure,
Held up his hand before his blinded eyes, 235
And so ador'd : but th' unconsuming fire

Innoxious rang'd th' unparching edifice.
But ne'er was Palace or was Monarch seen
More in that city, one a smouldering heap
Lay in its ashes white ; ' how went the King 240
And whither, no one knew, but He who knows
All things. 'Twas frequent in the vulgar tale,
None saw it, yet all knew them well that saw,*
At midnight manifest a huge arm came
Forth from the welkin ; once it wav'd and twice, 245
And then it was not : but a bolt thrice fork'd,
Each fork a spike of flame, burst on the roof,
And all became a fire, and all fell down
And smoulder'd, even as now the shapeless walls
Lie in scorch'd heaps and black. At that same hour 250
A dark steed and a darker rider past,
With speed bemocking mortal steed, or man,
Down the steep hill precipitous : 'twas like
In shape and hue black Favorin, on whose back
King Vortigern was wont to ride abroad ; 255
Like, surely not the same, for fire came out
From under his quick hoofs, and in his breath,

* Henry Huntingdon, Hist.

And sulphurous the blasted foot-tracks smelt,
Some dinted deep in the hard rock, some seared
On meadow grass, where never since have dews 260
Lain glittering, never the fresh verdure sprung.

Now is the whole Isle war. But I must crave
Pardon from those in meaner conflict slain,
Or conquerors ; Poesy's fair treasure house
Contains not all the bright and rich, that gem 265
The course of humankind ; in heaven alone
Preserves enroll'd th' imperishable brass,
In letters deep of amaranthine light,
All martyrs to their country and their God.

Oh that my spirit, holding the broad glass 270
Of its invention, might at once condense
All rays of glory from the kindling Isle
Full emanating, as of old 'tis famed
The philosophic Syracusan caught
The wide diverging sunbeams, by the force 275
Of mind creating to himself a right
And property in nature's common gifts,
And domineering the free elements.

He that heaven-seiz'd artillery pour'd forth
To sear the high beaks of the 'sieging fleet, 280

That burnt, unknowing whence, 'mid the wet waves.

So I the fine immortal light would pour
 Abroad, in the long after-time to beam
 A consecrate and vestal fire, to guide
 Through danger's precipices wild, the slopes 285
 Sleepy and smooth of luxury and false bliss,
 All lovers of their country. They my song
 Embosoming within their heart of heart,
 Like mine own Samor should bear on, too strong
 To perish, and too haughty to despair. 290
 They happier, he uprearing on the sand
 A Pharos, steady for a while to stem
 The fierce assaulting waves, in after times
 To fall; they building for eternity
 Britain's rock-founded temple of renown. 295

In the Isle's centre is a champain broad,
 Now broken into cornfield and smooth mead,
 Near which a hill, now with the ruin'd towers
 Of Coningsborough (from that fight of Kings
 Nam'd in old Saxon phrase), soars crested, Dune 300
 Skirts with her azure belt the level plain.

Morn dawn'd with all her attributes, the slow
 Impearling of the heavens, the sparkling white

On the webb'd grass, the fragrant mistiness,
The fresh airs with the twinkling leaves at sport, 305
And all the gradual and emerging light,
The crystalline distinctness settling clear,
And all the wakening and the strengthening sound.

There dawn'd she on a battle-field superb.

The beauty that is war's embellishment, 310

The splendour under whose quick-glancing pall

Man proudly moves to slay and to be slain,

How wonderful ! In semicircle huge,

Round that hill foot, the Saxon camps his strength,

A many-colour'd dazzling cirque, more rich 315

Than the autumnal woods, when the quick winds

Shake on them broken sunlight, than the skies

When thunder clouds are bursting into light,

And rainbow skirted hangs each fold, or fring'd

With liquid gold, so wav'd that crescent broad 320

With moving fire, bloom'd all the field with brass :

Making of dread voluptuousness, the sense

Of danger in deep admiration lost—

Oh beauteous if that morning had no eve !

The Eastern horn, his tall steeds to his car 325

Harness'd, whose scythes shone newly burnish'd, held
Caswallon; he his painted soldiery,
Their naked breasts blue-gleaming with uncouth
And savage portraitures of hideous things,
Human and monstrous terribly combin'd, 330
Array'd; himself no armour of defence
Cumber'd, as he were one Death dare not slay,
A being from man's vulgar lot exempt,
Commission'd to destroy, yet dangerless
Amid destruction, against whom war shower'd 335
All its stor'd terrors, but still baffled back
Recoil'd from his unwounded front serene.

The centre were the blue-eyed Germans, loose
Their fierce hair, various each strong nation's arms,
A wild and terrible diversity 340
In the fell skill of slaughter, in the art
Of doing sacrifice to death. Some helm'd,
Whose visors like distended jaws appear'd
Of sylvan monster, some in brindled furs
Wrapt shaggy, on whose shoulders seem'd to ramp 245
Yet living the fix'd claws; with cross-bows some,
Some with long lances, some with falchions curv'd.

The Arian, wont to make the sable night
 A pander to his terrors,* in swarth arms
 He bursting from the forest, when the shades 350
 Were deepest, like embodied gloom advanc'd,
 Shap'd for some dreadful purpose, now he mov'd
 Unnatural 'mid the clear and golden day.
 Here Hengist, Horsa there amid the troop
 Wound their war-horses; he his weapon fell 355
 Shook, a round ball of iron spikes chain'd loose
 To a huge pike-stave, like a baleful star,
 Aye gleaming devastation in its sweep;
 Hengist begirt with that fam'd falchion call'd
 The "Widower of Women;" over all 360
 The fatal White Horse in the banner shone.
 Round to the left Argantyr with the Jutes
 And Anglians; these for Offa's slaughter wild
 T' exact the usurious payment of revenge;

* Ceterum Arii super vires, quibus enumeratos paullo ante populos
 antecedunt, truces, insitæ feritati arte ac tempore *lenocinantur*: nigra
 scuta, tincta corpora: atras ad prælia noctes legunt: ipsâque formidine
 atque umbrâ feralis exercitûs terrorem inferunt, nullo hostium sustinente
 novum ac velut infernum aspectum: nam primi in omnibus præliis oculi
 vincuntur.—Tuc. Ger. c. 43.

He sternly mindful of that broken fight 365
 By Wye's clear stream, and his defrauded sword
 Of its hope-promis'd banquet, Samor's blood.
 Above the multitude of brass the heights
 Were crowded with the wives and mothers,* they
 With their known presence working shame of flight, 370
 And the high fear of being thought to fear.
 With them the spoils of Britain, vessels carv'd,
 Statues, and vestments of the Tyrian dye,
 Standards with antique legend scroll'd of deeds
 Done in old times, and gorgeous arms, and cups 375
 And lamps, and plate, or by fantastic art
 Minister'd to fond luxury's wayward choice,
 Or consecrate to th' altar use of God.

And there the Saxon Gods, the wood and stone
 Whereto that people knelt, and deified 380
 Their own hands work ; the Father of the race
 Woden, all arm'd and crown'd ; the tempest Lord,

* —et in proximo pignora : unde feminarum ululatus audiri, unde vagitus
 infantium ; hi cuique sanctissimi testes, hi maximi laudatores. Ad matres,
 ad conjuges vulnera ferunt : nec illæ numerare, aut exigere plagas pavent.
 Cibosque et hortamina pugnantibus gestant. Tac. Germ.

The thunder-shaking Thor,* twelve radiant stars
 His coronet, and sceptred his right hand.
 He on his stately couch reclining; fierce 385
 In his mysterious multitude of signs,
 Arminsul; and th' Unnameable,† he fix'd
 On his flint pedestal, his skeleton shape
 Garmented scanty in a winding sheet,
 And in his hand a torchblaze, meet to search 390
 Earth's utmost, while in act to spring, one hand
 Upon his head, upon his shoulder one,
 His faithful Lion ramp'd in sculptur'd ire.

Southward, with crescent its out-stretching horns
 Circling the foe, lay stretch'd the British camp; 395
 The centre held King Emrys, on the right
 Pendragon, on the left th' Armoric King,
 With all his tall steeds and brave riders, they
 The fathers of that fam'd chivalric race
 Of knights and ladies, glorious in old song, 400
 White-handed Iseult, Launcelot of the Lake,
 Chaste Perceval, that won the Sangreal quest.

But every where and in all parts alike
 The Avenger held his post; all heard his voice,

* Verstegan.

† Verstegan.

All felt his presence, all obey'd his sway. 405
As western hurricane whirls up from earth,
And bears where'er it will, the loose-sheaf'd corn,
The fluttering leaves, the shatter'd forest boughs,
Even so his spirit seiz'd and bore along,
And swept with it those proud brigades. Nor there 410
Was not young Malwyn, he his helmet wore
Light shadow'd by an eagle plume, so sued
His sire, lest in the wildering battle met
Their cars should clash in impious strife, nor sought
The father more obedience from the son, 415
For Britain and with Samor fix'd to war.
And in his brown and weather beaten arms
Came Vortimer, a pine-tree stem his mace
That clove the air with desultory sweep.
But by the river brows'd a single steed, 420
Sable as one of that poetic pair,
On the fair plain of Enna, in the yoke
Of Pluto, when Proserpina let fall
From her soft lap her flowers, and mourn'd their loss
Lavish, nor for herself reserv'd her tears. 425
The horseman, not unlike that ravisher,
Wore kingly aspect, and his step and mien

Were as his realm were in a gloomier clime,
Amid a drearier atmosphere, 'mid things
Sluggish and melancholy, slow and dead. 430
As though disclaimed by each, and claiming none,
He lay, with cold impartial apathy
Eying both armies, as their fates to him
Were equal, and not worth the toil of hope.

But over either army silence hung, 435
Silence long, heavy, deep, as every heart
Were busied with eternity; all thoughts
Were bidding farewell to the Sun, whose rise
They saw, whose setting they might never see,
And all the heavens were thinly overdrawn 440
With light and golden clouds, as though to couch
The angels and the spirits floating there,
While Heaven the lucid hierarchy pour'd forth
To view that solemn spectacle beneath,
A battle waged for freedom and for faith. 445

First rose a clamour and a crowding rush
On the hill side, and an half-stifled cry,
"The Prophetess! the Prophetess!" was heard.
Upon a waggon, 'mid her idol Gods,

She of the seal'd lip and the haunted heart, 450
 The aged Virgin* sate; her thin gray hair
 And hollow eyes in a strange sparkling steep'd:
 Twice in the memory of the oldest spake
 Her voice, when Gothic Alaric had set
 His northern ensign on Rome's shatter'd walls, 455
 That day along the linden shadow'd Elbe
 She went, with bitter smile and broken song
 That mock'd at grandeur fall'n and pride in dust.
 Once more, when Vortigern in that fam'd feast
 Crown'd the fierce Hengist; in the German woods 460
 She roam'd, with lofty and triumphal tone,
 Shrieking of sceptres dancing in her sight,
 And Woden's sons endiadem'd that rose
 And swept and glitter'd past her. Now with eye
 Restless, and churning lip she sate, and thrice 465
 She mutter'd—"Flight! Flight! Flight!" Then look'd
 she out
 Upon the orient Sun, and cried, "Down! down!"—
 Then westward turn'd she, and withdrew her hand,

* *Vetere apud Germanos more, quo plerasque feminarum fatidicas, et augescente superstitione, arbitrantur deas. Tac. Hist. 4—61.*

From dallying with her loose and hanging chin,
And beckon'd to the faint remaining haze 470
Of twilight. "Back, fair darkness, beauteous gloom,
Back!" Still the Sun came on, the shades dispell'd.
Then rose she up, then on the vacant space
Between both armies fix'd her eye; half laugh,
Half agony her cheek relax'd.—"I see, 475
I see ye, ye Invisible! I hear,
Soundless, I hear ye! Choosers of the slain!
Ye of the white forms hors'd on thunder clouds!
Ye of Valhalla! colourless as air,
As air impalpable! wind on and urge 480
Your sable and self-govern'd steeds; They come,
They whom your mantling hydromel awaits,
Whose cups are crown'd, the guests of this night's feast.
They come, they come, for whom the Gods shall leap
From their cloud thrones, and ask ye whom ye bring
In stern troops crowding to their secret joy." 486
She shook her low dropt lip, and thus went on:
"The bow is broken, and the shafts are snapt;
The lance is shiver'd, and the buckler rent;
The helm is cloven, and the plumes are shed; 490

The horse hath founder'd, and the rider fallen ;
The Crown'd are crownless, kingdomless the Kings ;
The Conquerors conquer'd, and the Slayers slain ;
One falls not, but he shall not stand, the axe
Shall glean th' imperfect harvest of the sword ; 495
The scaffold drinks the lees of battle's cup ;
And one is woundless amid myriad wounds,
And one is wounded where there is but one.
Ho, for the broad-horn'd Elk that leads the herd !
Ho, for the Pine that tops the shattering wood ! 500
Ho, for the Bark that Admirals all the fleet !
The herd is scatter'd, and the Elk unscath'd,
The wood is levell'd, upright is the Pine,
The fleet is wreck'd, the Admiral on the waves.
That Elk is in himself a sacrifice, 505
That Pine shall have a storm its own, that Bark
Shall perish in a solitary wreck,
A sacrifice of shame ! a storm of dread !
A bitter ignominious solitude !"—
She had not ended, when a single steed 510
Burst furious from the British line, with flight
That had a tread of air, and not of earth.

Fierce and direct he whirl'd to the hot charge
His youthful Rider. Upright sate the Boy
Arthur, at first with half reverted look, 515
As to his mother to impart his joy,
His transport. Early, oh fame-destin'd Child,
Put'st thou thy sickle in the field of fame.
Over his head a dome of fiery darts
And cross-bow bolts vault o'er th'encumber'd air. 520
Yet forward swept the child his rapid charge,
And all at once to rescue all the Chiefs
Rush'd onward; Uther's dragon seem'd to sear
The winds with its hot waving, Emrys struck
His coursers reeking flanks, his weapon huge 525
Rear'd Vortimer, and Malwyn's wheels 'gan whirl.
And on the other side Argantyr tall,
Hengist and Horsa, all the titled brave,
Burst from their tardy lines, that vast behind
Came rolling in tumultuous order on; 530
As when at spring time under the cold pole
Two islands high of ice warp heavy and huge
Upon the contrary currents, first th' assault
The promontories break, till meet the whole

With one long crash, that wakes the silence, there 535
Seated since time was born, far off and wide
Rock'd by the conflict fierce old ocean boils.

Still th' upright Child seem'd only to rejoice
In the curvettings of his wanton steed,
And in the mingled dazzling of bright arms. 540
But over him a shield is spread, before
A sword is wav'd, on every side the shield
Dashes rude death aside, whirls every where
The rapid and unwearied sword; the rein
Of the fleet steed hath Samor grasp'd, and guides 545
Amid the turmoil. As when the eagle sire
Up in the sunshine leads his daring young,
Sometimes the dusk shade of his wing spreads o'er,
And soft and broken in through the thick plumes
Gleams the unblinding splendour. So secure 550
Wag'd that fair Child his early war. But wild
The wavering fray rock'd to and fro, and burnt
Like one huge furnace the quick-flashing plain.
Ever as 'twere the same the Apostle saw
In the Apocalypse, Death's own pale steed, 555
Over the broad fight shook the White Horse, spread

Where'er its gleaming lighten'd the dun gloom,
Steamy and vast the curdling slaughter pools.
And such confusion burst around of lines
Mingling and interchanging, Valour found 560
No space for proud selection, forc'd to strike
What cumber'd and obstructed its free path,
To hew out through a mass of vulgar life
A passage to some princely foe; twice met
Horsa and Vortimer, Argantyr twice 565
Smote at Pendragon, but the whirlpool fierce
Asunder swept them, and the deep of war
Swallow'd them; many a broad and shapeless chasm
Was rent in either battle, but new fronts
Rush'd in, and made the shiver'd surface whole. 570
The sun was shut out by a sphere of dust
That wrapt the tumult, 'twas no sight for Heaven
That rending and defacing its prime work,
That waste of man, its masterpiece. But far
Th' Avenger had borne off the Child, his steed 575
First drew his breath before Igerna's tent.

With her soft face upon the dust she lay,
Struggling to hush her own lament, in hope

From the fierce din of war might haply come
Some sound of cheer and comfort ; but when full 580
It rush'd upon her hearing, loud she shriek'd
To drown the very noise she strove to hear.

But when her Child's voice sounded, she look'd up
With a cold glance which said, " That sound I've heard
Every sad moment since he went, my soul 585
Is sick of self-deception, will not trust

Again, to be again beguil'd." She saw,
And forc'd a sportive look to her sad face

To lure him to her snowy arms. While he
Back to the battle, as a scene of joy, 590

Look'd waywardly, she clasp'd him to her breast
With a fond anger, and both smil'd and wept.

A moment Samor gaz'd on her, and—" All
All have their hopes, and all those hopes fulfill'd,

But I, this side the grave no hope for me 595
And no fulfilment."—Fast as sight could track

The battle felt him in its thousand folds.

But the undistinguish'd and chance-mingled fight
Brook'd not young Malwyn ; he his virgin shield
Disdain'd mean blood should stain : where Hengist fought

He swept, the Saxon saw the eagle plume, 601
And turn'd aloof, and on some other head
Discharg'd the blow for him uprear'd. But he
Next plung'd where Horsa's starlike weapon shone,
Disastrous, shaking ruin, yet even that 605
Glanc'd aside from the eagle plume. The Boy
Utter'd a wrathful disappointed cry,
And 'gainst Argantyr drove his car. He paus'd,
And cried aloud, "The eagle plume," and plung'd
Elsewhere for victims. That Pendragon heard, 610
Even as he toil'd the third time to make way
Amid' the circling slain to the Anglian crest,
And taunting thus,—“Methinks the eagle plume
Hath some few feathers of the dove, so soft
Spreads its peace-breathing influence.” But the Youth,
“Ha, Father! thus, thus guil'st thou to a faint 616
And infamous security thy son?
Thus enviest thou a noble foe? thus guard'st
With a base privilege from peril? Off,
Coward distinction! off, faint hearted sign!”
And helm and plume away he rent, his hair 620
Curl'd down his shoulders, radiant on his brow

The beauty of his anger shone, the pride
Of winning thus a right to glorious death.
Then set he forth on his bold quest again 625
Impatient. Him Prince Vortimer beheld
Sweeping between himself and Horsa, met
Their sea-shore fight by Thanet to renew ;
But something of his sister in his face,
Something of Lilian harden'd and grown fierce, 630
As that ungodly creed were true, and she
Familiar to rude deeds of blood, had come
One of Valhalla's airy sisters hence
To summon him she lov'd. That gleam of her,
That though ungente and unfeminine touch, 635
Exquisite, in mid air his rugged mace
Suspended ; but fierce Horsa on the Boy,
Just on his neck, let fall the fatal spikes,
And him the affrighted steeds bore off. But then
Began a combat over which Death seem'd 640
To hover, as of one assur'd, in hope
Of both for victims at his godless shrine.

Then wounded and bareheaded Malwyn urged
On Hengist his remaster'd steeds, the scythe

Ras'd his majestic war horse. But aside 645
He sprung, and flank'd the chariot ; long the strife,
Long, though unequal, like a serpent's tongue
Vibrated Malwyn's battle axe, twice bow'd
The Monarch to his saddle bow.—'Twas fame
More splendid, thus with Hengist to have fought 650
Than to have conquer'd hosts of meaner men.
Heavy at length and fatal glided in
The wily Chief's eluding falchion stroke ;
Fast flew the steeds, the master lay behind,
Dragging with his face downward, still the reins 655
Cling in his cold and failing fingers, trail
His neck and spread locks in the humid dust,
His sharp arms character the yielding sand.
On fly they, him at length deserting mute
And gasping on the bank, their hot hoofs plunge 660
Into the limpid Dune, and to the wood
Rove on. It chanc'd erewhile that thither came
To freshen with the water his spent steeds,
And lave the clogging carnage from his wheels,
Caswallon, he his huge and weary length 665
Cast for brief rest upon the bank ; a groan

Came from a helmless head that in the grass
Lay undistinguish'd. " 'Tis a Briton," cried
Caswallon, " cast the carrion off to feed
The dogs and kites, that thus irreverent breaks 670
Upon its monarch's rest." Even as a flower,
Poppy or hyacinth, on its broken stem,
Languidly raises its encumber'd head,
And turns it to the gentle evening sun,
So feebly rose, so turn'd that Boy his face 675
Unto the well-known voice ; twice rais'd his head,
Twice it fell back in powerless heaviness ;
Even at that moment from the dark wood came,
Lured by their partners in the stall and field,
His chariot coursers, heavily behind 680
Dragging the vacant car, loose hung the reins,
And mournfulness and dull disorder slack'd
The spirit of their tread. Caswallon knew,
And he leap'd up ; the Boy his bloodless lips
With a long effort opened.—" Was it well, 685
Father, at this my first, my earliest fight,
To mock me with a baffled hope of fame ?
Well was it to defraud me of my right

To noble death ?"—and speaking thus he died.

Above him his convuls'd unconscious hands 690

Horribly with his rough black beard at play,

Wrenching and twisting off the rooted locks,

Yet senseless of the pain, the Father lean'd.

Then leap'd he up, with cool and jealous care

Within his chariot plac'd the lifeless corpse, 695

And with his lash fierce rent the half-unyok'd

Half-harness'd steeds ; disorderly and swift

As with their master's ire instinct they flew,

Making a wide road through the hurtling fray.

Briton or Saxon, friend or foe alike, 700

Kinsman or stranger, one wide enmity

'Gainst general humankind, one infinite

And undistinguishing lust of carnage fill'd

The Master and the Horses ; so wild groans

Follow'd where'er he moved, 'twas all to him, 795

So slaughter dripp'd and reek'd from the chok'd scythes.

The low lay mow'd like the spring grass, down swept

On th' eminent, like lightning on the oaks,

His battle axe, each time it fell, each time

A life was gone, each time a hideous laugh 710

Shone on the Slayer's cheek and writhing lip ;
As in the Oriental wars where meet
Sultan and Omrah, under his broad tower
Moves stately the huge Elephant, a shaft
Haply casts down his friendly rider, wont 715
To lead him to the tank, whose children shar'd
With him their feast of fruits: awhile he droops
Affectionate his loose and moaning trunk :
Then in his grief and vengeance bursts, and bears
In his feet's trampling rout and disarray 720
To either army, ranks give way, and troops
Scatter, while swaying on his heaving back
His tottering tower, he shakes the sandy plain.

Meanwhile had risen a conflict high and fierce
For Britain's royal banner ; Hengist here, 725
Argantyr, the Vikinger, Hermingard,
And other Chiefs. But there th' Armoric King,
Emrys, and Uther, with the Avenger stood,
An iron wall against their inroad ; turn'd
Samor 'gainst him at distance heard and seen, 730
The car-borne Mountaineer, then Uther met
Argantyr, Hengist and King Emrys fought,

The rest o'erborne King Hoel; one had slain
The standard bearer, and all arms at once
Seiz'd as it fell, all foreign and all foes. 735
When lo, that sable Warrior, that retir'd
And careless had look'd on, upon his steed
And in the battle, like a thundercloud
He came, and like a thundercloud he burst,
Black, cold, and sullen, conquering without pride 740
And slaying without triumph; three that grasp'd
The standard came at once to earth, while he
Over his head with kingly motion sway'd
The bright redeemed ensign, and as fell
The shaken sunlight radiant o'er his brow, 745
Pride came about him, and with voice like joy
He cried aloud, " Arles ! Arles !"—and shook his sword,
" Thou'st won me once a royal crown, and now
Shalt win a royal sepulchre."—The sword
Perform'd its fatal duty, down they fell 750
Before him, Jute and Saxon, nameless men
And Chieftains; what though wounds he scorn'd to ward,
Nor seem'd to feel, show'r'd on him, and his blood
Ooz'd manifest, still he slew, still cried, " Arles ! Arles !"

Still in the splendour the wav'd standard spread 755
Stood glorying the arm'd darkness of his form;
Stood from his wounded steed dismounted, stood
Amid an area of dead men, himself
About to die, none daring an assault,
He powerless of assailing. But the crown 760
That on the flag-staff gleam'd, he wrench'd away,
And on his crest with calm solicitude
Plac'd it, then planting 'mid the high-heap'd slain
The standard, to o'ercanopy his sleep,
As one upon his nightly couch of down 765
Composes quietly his weary head,
So royally he laid him down to die.—

But now was every fight broke off, a pause
Seiz'd all the battle, one vast silence quench'd
All tumult; slain and slayer, life and death 770
Possess'd one swoon of torpor, droop'd and fail'd
All passions, pride, wrath, vengeance, hate, dismay,
All was one wide astonishment: alone
Two undistracted on each other gazed,
Where helpless in their death-blood they lay steep'd, 775
The ebbing of each other's life, the stiff

Damp growing on of death ; till in a groan
Horsa exhausted his fierce soul : then came
A momentary tinge, soft and subdued
As of affections busy at his heart, 780
On Vortimer's expiring brow, his lip
Wore something of the curl men's use, when names
Belov'd are floating o'er the thought, the flowers
On that lone grave made fragrant his sick sense,
And Eamont murmured on his closing ear. 785

But he, whose coming cast this silence on
Before it, as the night its widening shade,
Curtaining nature in its soundless pall,
An atmosphere of dying breath, where'er
He moved, his drear envelopment, his path 790
An element of blood : so fleet, so fast
The power to fly seem'd wither'd, ere he came,
Men laid them down and said their prayers and look'd
For the quick plunging hoofs and rushing scythes :
As when the palsied Universe aghast 795
Lay, all its tenants, even Man, restless Man,
In all his busy workings mute and still,
When drove, so poets sing, the Sun-born youth
Devious through heaven's affrighted signs, his Sire's

Ill-granted chariot, him the Thunderer hurl'd 800
From th' empyrean headlong to the gulph
Of the half-parch'd Eridanus, where weep
Even now the Sister Trees their amber tears
O'er Phaeton untimely dead. And now
Had the Avenger reach'd the path of death, 805
And stood in arms before the steeds, they came
Rearing their ireful hoofs to dash him down ;
But with both hands he seiz'd their foaming curbs,
Holding them in their spring with outstretch'd arm
Aloft, and made their lifted crests a shield 810
Against their driver. He with baffled lash
Goaded their quivering flanks, but that strong arm
Held them above avoiding, their fore-hoofs
Beat th' unhurt air, and overspread his breast,
Like a thick snow-shower, the fast falling foam. 815
Then leap'd Caswallon down, back Samor hurl'd
Coursers and chariot, and, " Now," cried aloud,
" Now, King of Britain, in the name of God
I tender thee a throne, two yards of earth
To rot on, and a diadem, a wreath 820
Of death-drops for thy haught aspiring brow.

" There, there, look there," Caswallon cried, his hand

Stretch'd tow'rd his son, and in a frantic laugh
Broke out, and echoed.—“ Diadems and thrones !”
With rigid finger pointing at the dead. 825

A moment, and the fury burst again ;
Down came the ponderous battle axe, from edge
To edge it rived the temper'd brass, as swift
As shot-stars the thin ether ; but the glaive
Of Samor right into his bosom smote. 830

Like some old turret, under whose broad shade
At summer noon the shepherd oft his flock
Hath driven, and in the friendly cool rejoic'd,
Suddenly, violently, from its base
Push'd by the winter floods, he fell ; his look 835
Yet had its savage blasphemy : he felt

More than the blow, the deadly blow, the cries
Of joy and triumph from each army sent,
Taunting and loud ; to him to die was nought,
He could not brook the shame of being slain. 840

But other thoughts arose ; hardly he crept
To where dead Malwyn from the car hung down,
Felt on his face the cold depending hand,
And with a smile half joy, half anguish died.

Th' Avenger knelt, his heart too full for prayer, 845
Knelt, and held up his conquering sword to heaven,
Yet spake not. But the battle, as set free,
Its rugged game renew'd, nor equal now
Nor now unbroken, Flight and shameful Rout
Here scattered, Victory there and Pride array'd, 850
And mass'd in comely files and full square troops
Bore onward. Mountaineer and German break
Around the hill foot, and like ebbing waves
Disperse away. Argantyr, Hengist move
In the recoiling flood reluctant. Them 855
Nought more resembled, than two mountain bulls
Driven by the horse and dog and hunter spear,
Still turning with huge brow and tearing up
The deep earth with their wrathful stooping horns.

But as the hill was opened, from the top 860
Even to the base arose a shriek and scream,
As when some populous Capital besieg'd,
Sees yawning her wide-breached wall, and all
Her shatter'd bulwarks on the earth, so wild,
So dissonant the female rout appear'd 865
Hanging with fierce disturbance the hill side.

Some with rent hair ran to and fro, some stood
With silent mocking lip, some softly prest
Their infants to their heart, some held them forth
As to invite the foe, and for them sued 870
The mercy of immediate slaughter. Some
Spake fiercely of past deeds of fame, some sang
In taunting tone old songs of victory. Wives
With eye imploring and quick heaving breast
Look'd sad allusions to endearments past ; 875
Mothers, all bashfulness cast down, rent down
Their garments, to their sons displaying bare
The fountains of their infant nourishment,
Now ready to be plough'd with murtherous swords.
Some knelt before their cold deaf Gods, some scoff'd
With imprecation blasphemous and shrill 881
Their stony and unwakening thunders. Noise
Not fiercer on Cithæron side, th' affright
Not drearier, when the Theban Bacchic rout,
Their dashing cymbals white with moonshine, loose 885
Their tresses bursting from their ivy crowns,
And purple with entwoven vine-leaves, led
Their orgies dangerous. In the midst the Queen

Agave shook the misdeem'd Lion's head
Aloft, and laugh'd and danc'd and sung, nor knew 890
That lion suckled at her own white breast.

But Elfelin the Prophetess her seat
Chang'd not, nor the near horror could recall
Her eye from its strange commerce with th' unseen ;
There had she been, there had she been in smiles 895
All the long battle ; just before the spear
Or falchion drank a warrior's life-blood, she
Audible, as an high-tribunal'd judge,
Spake out his name, and aye her speech was doom.

Nor long the o'erbearing flight enwrap't thy strength,
Argantyr, thou amid the shattering wreck 901
Didst rise, as in some ruinous city old,
Babylon or Palmyra, magic built,
A single pillar yet with upright shaft
Stands, 'mid the wide prostration mossy and flat, 905
Shewing more eminent. Past the Saxon by,
And look'd and wonder'd, even that he delay'd ;
Cried his own Anglians.—“ King, away, away !”
First came King Hoel on, whose falchion clove
His buckler, with a wrest he burst in twain 910

The shivering steel ; came Emrys next, aside
His misaim'd blow he shook ; last Uther, him
His war horse, by Argantyr's beam-like spear
Then first appall'd, bore in vain anger past.

From his late victory in proud breathlessness 915
Slow came the Avenger, but Argantyr rais'd
A cry of furious joy, " Long sought, late found,
I charge thee, by our last impeded fight,
I charge thee, give me back mine own, my sword
Is weary of its bathes of vulgar blood, 920
And longs in nobler streams to plunge ; with thine
I'll gild and hang it on my Father's grave,
And his helm'd ghost in Woden's hall shall vaunt
The glories of his son." " Generous and brave,
When last we met, I shrunk to see my sword 925
Bright with God's sunlight, now with dauntless hand
I lift it, and cry On, in the name of God."

They met, they strove, as with a cloud enwrapt
In their own majesty ; their motions gave
Terror even to their shadows ; round them spread 930
Attention like a sleep. Flight paus'd, Pursuit
Caught up its loose rein, Death his furious work

Ceas'd, and a dreary respite gave to souls
Half parted; on their elbows rear'd them up
The dying, with faint effort holding ope 935
Their dropping eyelids, homage of delight
War from its victims thus exacting. Mind
And body engross'd the conflict. Men were seen
At distance, for in their peculiar sphere,
Within the wind and rush of their quick arms 940
None ventur'd, following with unconscious limbs
Their blows, and shrinking as themselves were struck.
Like scatter'd shiverings of a scath'd oak lay
Fragments of armour round them, the hard brass
Gave way, and broke the fiery temper'd steel, 945
The stronger metal of the human soul,
Valour, endur'd, and power thrice purified
In Danger's furnace fail'd not. Victory, tired
Of wavering, to those passive instruments,
Look'd to decide her long suspense. Behold 950
Argantyr's falchion, magic wrought, his sires
So fabled, by the Asgard dwarfs, nor hewn
From earthly mines, nor dipp'd in earthly fires,
Broke short. Th' ancestral steel the Anglians saw,

Sign of their Kings, and worship of their race, 955
Give way, and wail'd and shriek'd aloud. The King
Collected all his glory as a pall
To perish in, and scorn'd his sworded foe
To mock with vain defence of unarm'd hand.
The exultation and fierce throb of hope 960
Yet had not pass'd away, but look'd to death
As it had look'd to conquest, death so well,
So bravely earn'd to warrior fair as life:
Stern welcoming, bold invitation lured
To its last work the Conqueror's sword. Him flush'd
The pride of Conquest, vengeance long delay'd, 966
'Th' exalted shame of victory won so slow,
So toilsomely; all fiery passions, all
Tumultuous sense-intoxicating powers
Conspir'd with their wild anarchy beset 970
His despot soul. But he—"Ah, faithless sword,
To me as to thy master faithless, him
Naked at his extreme to leave, and me
To guile of this occasion fair to win
Honour or death from great Argantyr's arm." 975
"Christian, thy God is mightiest, scorn not thou

His bounty, nor with dalliance mock thy hour,
Strike and consummate !"—" Anglian yes, my God,
Th' Almighty, is the mightiest now and ever,
Because I scorn him not, I will not strike."— 980
So saying, he his sword cast down. Thus, thus
Warr'st thou ?" the Anglian cried, " then thou hast won.
I, I Argantyr yield me, other hand
Had tempted me in vain with that base boon
Which peasants prize and women weep for, life : 985
To lord o'er dead Argantyr fate might grant,
He only grants to vanquish him alive,
Only to thee, well nam'd Avenger !" Then
The Captive and the Conqueror th' armies saw
Gazing upon each other with the brow 990
Of high arch'd admiration ; o'er the field
From that example flow'd a noble scorn
Of slaughtering the defenceless, mercy slak'd
The ardour of the fight. As the speck'd birch
After a shower, with th' odour of its bark 995
Freshens the circuit of the rain-bright grove ;
Or as the tender argent of Love's star
Smiles to a lucid quiet the wild sky :

So those illustrious rivals with the light
Of their high language and heroic act 1000
Cast a nobility o'er all the war.
That capture took a host, none scorn'd to yield,
So loftily Argantyr wore the garb
Of stern surrender, none inclin'd to slay,
When Samor held the signal up to spare. 1005
But where the Lord of that dire falchion nam'd
The Widower of Women? He, the Chief
Whose arms were squadrons, whose assault the shock
Of hosts advancing? Hath the cream-blanch'd steed,
Whom the outstripped winds pant after, borne away
His master, yet with hope uncheck'd, and craft 1011
Unbaffled, th' equal conflict to renew?
Fast flew the horse, and fierce the rider spurr'd,
That horse that all the day remorseless went
O'er dead and dying, all that Hengist slew 1015
All he cast down before him. Lo, he checks
Suddenly, startingly, with ears erect,
Thick tremor oozing out from every pore,
His broad chest palpitating, the thick foam
Lazily gathering on his dropping lip: 1020

The pawing of his uplift forefoot chill'd
 To a loose hanging quiver. — Nor his Lord
 Less horror seiz'd ; slack trembled in his left
 The bridle, with his right hand dropt his sword,
 Dripp'd slowly from its point the flaking blood
 Of hundreds, this day fall'n beneath its edge.

For lo, descended the hill side, stood up
 Right in his path the Prophetess, and held
 With a severe compassion both her arms
 Over her head, and thus—“ It cannot be,
 I've cried unto the eagle, air hath none ;
 I've sued unto the fleet and bounding deer,
 I've sought unto the sly and mining snake ;
 There's none above the earth, beneath the earth,
 No flight, no way, no narrow obscure way.
 I've call'd unto the lightning, as it leaped
 Along heaven's verge, it cannot guide thee forth ;
 I've beckon'd to the dun and pitchy gloom,
 It cannot shroud thee ; to the caves of earth
 I've wail'd and shriek'd, they cannot chamber thee.”

He spoke not, mov'd not, strove not : man and steed,
 Like some Equestrian marble in the courts

Of Emperors ; that fierce eye whose wisdom keen
Pierc'd the dark depths of counsel, hawk-like-roved,
Seizing the unutter'd thoughts from out men's souls,
Wrought order in the battle's turbulent fray 1046

By its command, on the aged Woman's face
Fix'd like a moonstruck idiot. She upright
With strength beyond her bow'd and shrivell'd limbs
Still stood, and murmur'd low, " Why com'st thou not,
Thou of the Vale? thou fated, come ! come ! come !"

The foes o'ertook, he look'd not round, their tramp
Was round him, still he mov'd not ; violent hands
Seiz'd on him, still the enchanted falchion hung
Innocent as a feather by his side. 1055

They tore him from his steed, still clung his eyes
On her disastrous face ; she fiercely shriek'd
Half pride at her accomplish'd prophecy,
Half sorrow at Erle Hengist's fall, then down
Upon the stone that bore her, she fell dead. 1060

BOOK XII.

OH, Freedom, of our social Universe
The Sun, that feedest from thy urn of light
The starry commonwealth, from those mean lamps
Modestly glimmering in their sphere retir'd,
Even to the plenar and patrician orbs, 5
That in their rich nobility of light,
Or golden royalty endiadem'd,
Their mystic circle undisturb'd round thee
Move musical; but thou thy central state
Preserving, equably the fair-rank'd whole 10
In dutiful magnificence maintain'st,
And stately splendour of obedience. Earth
Wonders, th' approval of th' Almighty beams
Manifest in the glory of the work.

Though sometimes drown'd within the red eclipse 15
Of tyranny, or brief while by the base
And marshy exhalations of low vice
And popular license madden'd thou hast flash'd
Disastrous and intolerable fire ;
Yet ever mounting hast thou still march'd on 20
To thy meridian throne ; my waxen wing
Oh, quenchless luminary ! may not soar
To that thy dazzling and o'erpowering noon ;
Rather the broken glimpses of thy dawn
Visiteth, when thy orient overcast 25
A promise and faint foretaste of its light
Beam'd forth, then plung'd its cloud-slak'd front in gloom.
Even with such promise dost thou now adorn
Thy chosen city by the Thames, where holds
Victorious Emrys his high Judgment court. 30
Thither the long ovation hath he led,
Amid the solemn music of rent chains,
The rapture of deliverance, where he past
Earth brightening, and the face of man but now
Brow-sear'd with the deep brand of servitude, 35
To its old upright privilege restor'd

Of gazing on its kindred heaven. The towns
 Gladden'd amid their ruins, churches shook
 With throngs of thankful votaries,* till 'twas fear
 Transport might finish Desolation's work, 40
 And bliss precipitate the half moulder'd walls.
 'Tis fam'd, men died for joy, untimely births
 Were frequent, as the eager mothers prest
 To show their infants to the brightening world.
 They that but now beheld the bier-borne dead 45
 With miserable envy, past them by
 Contemptuously pitying, as too soon
 Departed from this highly gifted earth.
 So they the Trinobantine City reach'd:
 Without the walls, close by the marge of Thames, 50
 The synod of the Conquerors met; a place
 Solemn and to the soul discoursing high.
 Here broad the bridgeless Thames, even like themselves
 Thus at their flush and high tide of renown,
 Swell'd his exulting waters. There all waste 55

* Then did Aurelius Ambrosius put the Saxons out of all other parts of the land, and repaired such cities, towns, and also churches, as by them had been destroyed or defaced, &c. Holl. Book 6. Chap. 8.

The royal cemetery of Britain lay,
The monuments, like their cold tenantry,
Mouldering, above all ruin as beneath,
A wide profound, drear sameness of decay.
Upon the Church of Christ had heavily fallen 60
The Pagan desolation, hung the doors
Loose on their broken and disused hinge,
And grass amid the checquer'd pavement squares
Was springing, and along the vacant choir
The shrill wind was God's only worshipper. 65
Even where they met, through the long years have sate
In Parliament our nation's high and wise.
There have deep thoughts been ponder'd, strong designs
On which the fate of the round world hath hung.
Thence have the emanating rays of truth, 70
Freedom, and constancy, and holiness
Flow'd in their broad beneficence, no bound
Owning but that which limits this brief earth,
Brightening this misty state of man ; the winds
That thence bear mandates to th' inconstant thrones 75
Of Europe, to the realms of th' orient Sun,
Or to the new and ocean-sever'd earth,

Or to the Southern cocoa-feather'd isles,
Are welcome, as pure gales of health and joy.
Still that deep dwelling underneath the earth 80
Its high and ancient privilege maintains,
Dark palace of our island's parted Kings,
Earth-ciel'd pavilion of our brave and wise,
Whose glory ere it swept them off, hath cast
A radiance on the scythe of Death. Disus'd 85
For two long heathen ages, it became
The pavement of our sumptuous minster fair,
That ever and anon yet gathers in
King, Conqu'ror, Poet, Orator, or Sage
To her stone chambers, there to sleep the sleep 90
That wakens only at the Archangel's trump.

First in the synod rose King Emrys; he
The royal sword of justice from his side
Ungirding, plac'd it in the Avenger's hand,
And led him to the judgment-seat. He shrunk, 95
And offer'd back the solemn steel.—“ Oh ! King,
Judge and Avenger ! who shall reconcile
The discord of those titles, private wrongs
Will load my partial arm, and drag to earth

The unsteady balance. Only God can join 100

And blend in one the Injur'd and the Judge."

But as a wave lifts up and bears along

A stately bark, so the acclamation swell

Floated into the high Tribunal throne

Reluctant Samor: on his right the King 105

Sate sceptered, royal Uther on the left.

While all around the assembled Nation bask'd

In his effulgent presence. 'Twas a boast

In after ages this day to have seen

Him whom all throng'd to see; memory of him, 110

Every brief notice of his mien and height

Became an heir-loom; mothers at the font

Gave to their babes his name, and e'er that child

Was held the staff and honour of the race.

So met the Nation in their judgment Hall, 115

Its pavement was the sacred mother earth,

Its roof the crystal and immortal heavens.

Then forth the captives came, Argantyr first,

Even with his wonted loftiness of tread:

Nature's rich heraldry upon his brow 120

Emblazing him of those whose scorn the world

Bears unasham'd, by whom to be despis'd
 Is no abasement. Men's eyes rang'd from him
 To Samor, back to him—in wonder now
 Of conquest o'er such mighty foe, now lost 125
 The wonder in their kindred Conqueror's pride.
 Then said the Anglian—"Wherefore lead ye here?"
 The sternness of his questioning appall'd
 All save the Judge.—"What Briton," he replied,
 "Witnesseth aught against the Anglian Chief?"— 130
 Thereat was proclamation, East and West
 And North and South: the silent winds came back
 With wings unloaded: so that noble mien
 Wrought conquest o'er man's darkest passions, hate,
 And doubt, and terror, so the Captive cast 135
 His yoke on every soul, and harness'd it
 Unto his valiant spirit's chariot wheels:

Then spake the stately and tribunal'd Judge—
 "Anglian Argantyr! Britain is not wont
 T' inflict upon a fair and open foe 140
 Aught penal but defeat; her warfare bows
 Beneath her feet but tramples not; her throne
 Hath borne the stormy brunt of thy assault,

And dash'd it off, and thus she saith, "Return,
Return unto thy German woods, nor more, 145
Once baffled, vex our coasts with fruitless war.
And thy return shall be to years remote
Our bond and charter of security ;
A shudder and cold trembling at our name
Shall pass with thee, the land that hath spurn'd back 150
Argantyr's march of victory, shall be known
T' eternal freedom consecrate. Your ships
Shall plough our seas, but turn their timorous prows
Aloof, while on the deck the Sea King points
To our white cliffs, and saith—' The Anglian thence 155
Retreated, shun the unconquerable shore.'—

" So nevermore shall my hot warhorse bathe
In British waters, nor my falchion meet
The bold resistance of a British steel,
So wills the Conqueror, thus the Conquer'd swears." 160

Thus spake Argantyr ; sudden then and swift
Loftier shot up his brow, prophetic hues
Swam o'er his agitated features, words
Came with a rush and instantaneous flow.—

" I tell thee, Briton, that thy sons and mine 165

Shall be two meeting and conflicting tides,
Whose fierce relentless enmity shall lash
This land into a whirlpool deep and wide,
To swallow in its vast insatiate gulph
Her peace and smooth felicity, till flow 170
Their waters reconcil'd in one broad bed,
Briton and Anglian one in race and name.
'Tis written in the antient solemn Runes,
'Tis spoken by prophetic virgin lips.
Avenger, thou and I our earthly wars 175
Have ended, but my spirit yet shall hold
Noble, inexorable strife with thine.
It shall heave off its barrow, burst its tomb,
And to my sons discourse of glorious foes
In this rich Island to be met: my shade 180
Shall cross them in their huntings, it shall walk
The ocean paths and on the winds, and seize
Their prows, and fill their sails, and all its voice
And all its secret influences urge
To the White Isle ;* their slumbers shall not rest, 185

* The Welsh called it Inis Wen, the White Island. Speed, B. 5. C. 2.
Some derive Britain from Pryd Cain—Beauty and White. *ibid.*

Their quiet shall be weariness, till lull'd

Upon the pillow of success repose

The high, the long hereditary feud."

So saying, he the bark that lay prepar'd

With sail unfurl'd, ascended. She went forth 190

Momently with quick shadow the blue Thames

Darkening, then leaving on its breast a light

Like silver. The fix'd eyes of wondering men

Track'd his departure, while with farewell gleam

The bright Sun shone upon his brow, and seem'd 195

A triumph in the motion of the stream ;

So loftily upon its long slow ebb

It bore that honour-laden bark.—Nor pause,

Lo, in the presence of the Judgment Court

The second Criminal ; pride had not pass'd 200

Nor majesty from his hoar brow ; he stood

With all except the terror of despair,

Consciously in fatality's strong bonds

Manacled, of the coming death assur'd,

Yet fronting the black future with a look 205

Obdurate even to scornfulness. He seem'd

As he heard nought, as though his occupied ears

Were pervious to no sound, since that dim voice
Of her who speaking died, the silver hair'd,
The Prophetess, that never spake untrue: 210
As ever with a long unbroken flow
Her song was ranging through his brain, and struck
Its death-knoll on his soul. Nor change had come
Since that drear hour to eye or cheek; the craft,
The wisdom that was wont to make him lord 215
Over the shifting pageant of events,
Had given its trust up to o'er-ruling fate,
And that stern Paramount, Necessity,
Had seal'd him for her own. Amid them all
He tow'r'd, as when the summer thunderbolt 220
'Mid a rich fleet some storm-accustom'd bark
Hath stricken, round her the glad waters dance,
Her sails are full, her strong prow fronts the waves;
But works within the irrevocable doom,
Wells up her secret hold th' inundant surge, 225
And th' heavy waters weigh her slowly down.

For the arraignment made the Judge a sign,
And the first witness was a mighty cry,
As 'twere the voice of the whole Isle, as hills

And plains and waters their abhorrence spake ; 230

Hoarse harmony of imprecation seem'd

To break the ashy sleep of ruin'd towns,

And th' untomb'd slumbers of far battle vales.

As if the crowd about the Judgment Court :

Did only with articulate voice repeat. 235

What indistinct came down on every wind,

Then all the near, the distant, sank away,

Only a low and melancholy tone,

Like a far music down a summer stream

Remain'd ; upon the lull'd, nor panting air 240

Fell that smooth snow of sound, till nearer now

It swell'd, as clearer water-falls are heard,

When midnight grows more still. A funeral hymn,

It pour'd the rapture of its sadness out,

Even like a sparkling soporific wine. 245

But now and then broke from its low long fall,

Something of martial and majestic swell,

That spake its mourning o'er no vulgar dead.

Lo to the royal burying place, chance borne

Even at this solemn time, or so ordain'd 250

From their bright-scutcheon'd biers their part to bear

In this arraignment, came King Vortigern,
 And th' honour'd ashes of his Son. But still
 And voiceless these cold witnesses past on,
 Unto the place of tombs. Along the Thames 255
 Far floated into silence the spent hymn :
 And one accusing sound arose from them,
 The heavy falling of their earth to earth.

One female mourner came behind the King,
 Half of her face the veil conceal'd, her eyes 260
 Were visible, and though a deadly haze
 Film'd their sunk balls, she sent into the grave,
 Following the heavy and descending corpse,
 A look of such imploring loveliness,
 A glance so sad, so self-condemning, all, 265
 (So softly, tremulously it appeal'd)
 Might wonder that the spirit came not back
 To animate for the utterance that she wish'd
 Those bloodless lips ; forgiveness it was plain
 She sought, and one so beauteous to forgive, 270
 The dead might almost wake. And she sate down,
 Leaning her cheek upon a broken stone
 (Once a King's monument) as listening yet

Th' acceptance of her prayers: nor cloister'd Nun
Hath ever since mourning her broken vows, 275
And his neglect for whom those vows she broke,
Come to the image of her Virgin Saint
With such a faded cheek and contrite mien,
As her who by those royal ashes sate.

But lo, new witnesses; a matron train 280
In flowing robes of grief came forth, the wives
And mothers of those nobles foully slain
At the Peace Banquet, them the memory yet
Seem'd haunting of delicious days broke off.
On Hengist, even a captive, dared not they 285
Look firmly, as their helpless loneliness
Spake for them, they their solitary breasts
Beat, wrung their destitute cold hands, and pass'd.

Arose the mitred Germain, glanc'd his hand
From that majestic criminal, where lay 290
The ruins of God's church, and so sate down.

But Samor look'd upon the mourner train,
As though he sought a face that was not there,
That could not be, soft Emeric's.—“ I have none,
I only none to witness of my wrongs.”— 295

So said he, but he shook the softness off,
 On the tribunal rose severe, and stood
 Erect before the multitude. "Thou, King,
 And ye, assembled People of this Isle,
 If that I speak your sentence right, give in
 Your sanction of Amen. Here stands the man,
 Who two long years laid waste with fire and sword
 Your native cities and your altar shrines :
 Here stands the man, who by slow fraud and guile
 Discrown'd your stately Monarch, Vortigern : 305
 Here stands the man, hath water'd with your blood
 The red and sickening herbage of your land :
 Here stands the man, that to your peaceful feast
 Brought Murther, that grim seneschal, and drugg'd
 With your most noble blood your friendly cups." 310

And at each charge came in the deep Amen,
 Even like the sounds men hear on stormy nights,
 When many thunders are abroad. Nought moved
 Stood Hengist, if emotion o'er him pass'd,
 'Twas likest an elate contemptuous joy 315
 And glorying in those lofty worded crimes.
 Then, "Saxon Hengist, as thy sword hath made

Our children fatherless, so fatherless
 Must be thy children !”* And Amen knoll’d back,
 As a plague visited Metropolis 320
 Mourning the wide and general funeral, tolls
 From all her towers and spires the bell of death.

“ Thy children fatherless ! not so—not so”—
 Rose with a shriek that Woman by the grave,
 And she sprang forth, as from beneath the earth, 325
 As a partaker of, no mourner near
 That kingly coffin. Veil fell off, and band
 Started, through her bright tresses her pale face
 Glitter’d, like fine-chaf’d ivory set in gold.
 Between the Criminal and Judge her stand 330
 Rowena took ; him as she saw and knew
 Flush’d a sick rapture o’er her face and neck,
 A fading rose-hue, like eve’s parting light
 On a snow bank ; but from her marble brow
 She the bright-clustering hair wip’d back, and thus, 335
 “ Samor, the last time thou this brow beheld’st
 The moonlight was upon it, since that hour

* The words used to Agag were applied on this occasion, according to the Welsh tradition. Robert’s Translation of the Brut of Tysilio.

The water hath flow'd o'er it, holy sign
Hath there been left by Christian hand, and I
Thy creed have learnt, and one word breathes it all, 340
Mercy."—" But Justice is God's attribute,
Lady, as well as mercy, Man on earth
Must be Vicegerent of both stern and mild,
Lest over-ramping Evil set its foot
Upon the prostrate world. The doom is said, 345
The doom must be."—" Ha ! Man with heart of clay,
To answer with that cold and stedfast mien;
Oh, I'll go back and sue the dead again,
There's more forgiveness in the cold deaf corpse,
Than the warm keen-ear'd living. From that vault, 350
I felt sweet reconciliation stealing up,
That turn'd my tears to honey dew, here all,
All sullen and relentless on me glares.
I ask not for myself, not for myself,
The ice of death is round my heart, there long 355
I've felt the slow consuming prey, I feel
The trembling ebb of my departing life.
That hoary head, though granted to my prayers,
Shall never rest upon my failing knee,

The father that ye give me back (I feel 360

Ye give him, thou that bear'st the Avenger's name,

I know thee by a milder character)

That father cannot long be mine ; his hands

May lay me in the grave, his eyes may weep,

For they can weep, although ye think it not ; 365

Those hands ye deem for ever blood-embued,

I've felt them fondling with my golden hair,

When with gay childish foot I danc'd to meet

His far resounding horn. That horn shall sound,

But on my deaf and earth-clos'd ears no more, 370

No more."—" Rowena, when a Nation speaks,

The irrevocable sentence cannot change."

Then up her fair round arm she rais'd, and wrapt

Like a rich mantle round her : her old pride

As the poetic Juno in the clouds 375

Walking in her majestic ire, while slow

Before her th' azure-breasted peacocks draw

Her chariot.—" Tell me, thou that sit'st elate,

And ye, who call yourselves this British realm,

By what new right ye judge a German King, 380

Where are your charters, where your scrolls of law

Whose bright and blazon'd titles give ye power
To pass a doom on crowned head? Down, down,
Ye bold Usurpers of the Judgment seat,
Insolent doomers of a sacred life, 385
Beyond your sphere to touch, your grasp to seize."

"Lady, we judge by the adamantine law,
That lives within the eternal soul of man,
That God-enacted charter, "Blood for blood."

Exhausted she sank down upon her knees, 390
Her knees that fainted under her.—"Ye can,
Ye will not shew unto a woman's eyes
That bloody consummation, not to mine.
Oh, thou that speakest in that brazen tone
Implacable, the last time thou and I 395
Discours'd, thy voice was broken, tender, soft,
Remember'st thou? 'twas then as it had caught
The trembling of the moonlight, that lay round
With rapturous disquiet bathing us.
Remember'st thou?"—"Almost the Judgment sword
Fell from the Avenger's failing hand, but firm 401
He grasp'd it, and with eyes to heaven upturn'd,
"Oh, duty, duty, why art thou so stern?"

Then, " Lady, lo, the headsman with his steel ;
To that dark Priest 'tis given to sacrifice 405
The victim of to day—depart ! depart !
Colours may flow too deep for woman's sight,
And sounds may burst too drear for woman's ear."

Stately as lily on a sunshine bank,
Shaken from its curl'd leaves the o'ercharging dew, 410
Freshens and strengthens its bow'd stem, so white
So brightening to a pale cold pride, a faint
And trembling majesty, Rowena sate.
On Hengist's dropping lip and knitted brow
Was mockery at her fate-opposing prayer, 415
And that was all. But she—" Proud-hearted Men,
Ye vainly deem your privilege, your right,
Prerogative of your high-minded race,
The glory of endurance, and the state
Of strong resolving fortitude. Here I, 420
A woman born to melt and faint and fail,
A frail, a delicate, dying woman, sit
To shame ye." She endur'd the flashing stroke
Of th' axe athwart her eyesight, and the blood
That sprung around her she endur'd : still kept 425

The lily its unbroken stateliness,
And its pellucid beauty sparkled still,
But all its odours were exhal'd—the breath
Of life, the tremulous motion was at rest ;
A flower of marble on a temple wall, 430
'Twas fair but lived not, glitter'd but was cold.
While from the headless corpse t'its great account
Went fiercely forth the Pagan's haughty soul.

